

## Turned To Monsters (DSMP AU)

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# **Turned To Monsters (DSMP AU)**

by [Idk\\_im\\_just\\_here\\_now](#)

## Summary

Dream, freshly out of prison and on the hunt for an advantage, buys a strange potion from a shop. But after testing it, things go from bad to horrifying. Suddenly the entire SMP is thrown into chaos, and as people left and right begin to change, only three people are left to stop it.

A bringer of chaos. A long forgotten traitor. A god-blessed creator.

(THis fic does not frequently update!)

## Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

## A Little Bottle of Horrors

“Are you absolutely certain that you know it’s going to do that?” Dream demanded threateningly. The shop owner trembled as he slammed his hand down on the counter. “I refuse to buy it until I can confirm that you aren’t lying.”

“I-I can assure you, s-sir, it does exactly as it s-says,” they stuttered. The small shop was not crowded, but there were people walking around outside the large windows with an arrest warrant. A warrant that had his name on it. Dream felt cold anger crawl down his spine as he thought of the prison.

The dark. Barely any food. Nobody to talk to. Being tortured. It all hurt, more than he was ever going to admit to anyone. All his pain only fueled his quest.

“Listen here, buddy,” Dream said, his voice colder than ice. “I have a deal for you.” He drew his sword and pointed it directly at the shopkeeper’s neck, and they tensed in fear.

“If you can prove to me that this little potion-” he gestured to the vial on the counter “- actually does what it says it can do, I will take it for half the price that it says, and you won’t speak a word to the police about who came here. If you can’t prove it to me, I will chop off your head right here and now, take your money and the potions, and find someone else with something worth my time.”

Dream watched as the cogs turned in the shopkeeper’s head. He was clearly trying to find a way out of this that wouldn’t involve lowering his prices, but Dream knew that he wasn’t giving him any other options. It was either lose a little money or die.

Honestly, the easy choice was giving it to him and keeping their mouth shut. Why was it so hard for people to see it?

“I can find you proof, sir, but I need to go to the back of the shop to retrieve it.” Their voice steadied. Dream narrowed his eyes behind his mask. They had a plan, and whatever it was, he couldn’t let them try it.

“I’m going with you, to make sure no funny business happens.” His smile beneath the mask widened as any hint of hope in their eyes drained out.

He followed them back into the shop, and they carefully pulled something out of a drawer.

A shiver of disgust went through him as he saw what they’d pulled out. It was an arm, clearly dead for a long time. But that wasn’t what made him shiver.

The arm was covered in spikes, each of them ridged on the inside as if to keep something from escaping. Scaly patches also dotted it, each one tipped with a needle-sharp point. The hand on the end of the arm was blackened and clawed. Each claw was ridged as well. Dream carefully took it from the shopkeeper’s hands and examined it closer. These weren’t claws

that someone had stuck on to make a fake attraction for fun. These were legitimately attached to the hand, not a hint of skin broken. These were the claws of a predator.

He carefully squeezed the hand and the arm - Dream needed to verify something. The sound of old, yet clearly still muscle-filled flesh emitted from the appendage. He'd seen many things, but nothing horrified him quite like this.

"That was my great-grandfather's arm," the shopkeeper explained quietly. "He took some of that potion, and before we knew it, he started changing. My father took pictures of his arm, once or twice per day, to see how fast it spread."

He carefully gave them back the arm, and they handed him pictures. There were seventeen photos in total, but only fifteen days listed. As Dream flipped through the photos, he saw as the arm gradually went from a normal human arm into a clawed, dark gray monstrosity.

"Is that enough proof, sir?" they asked.

"More than enough. I'll do you a favor and buy it full price, but if I hear a word that I was ever in this area, your head will be on the ground before you can sell your next potion." Dream pulled out the money required to buy it - he barely had enough - and took the potion. He dropped the pictures on the ground and hastily left the shop.

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That night at his temporary camp out in the woods, Dream carefully turned the potion over in his hands. It glowed a menacing orange in the firelight, the golden topper and curving glass reflecting every flicker. The potion itself produced the occasional bubble by itself, but it seemed to be a mostly gelatinous thing.

A memory of the clawed arm rose up in his mind. Never had anything truly shaken him like that before. It was unnerving to be so scared by something like that.

Actually, that thing was unnerving to begin with. *Things like that shouldn't exist here - just another thing I need to fix once I get back in control of this world.*

He sighed and eyed the label on it for the fourth time. It read the exact same thing as it had every time - **Transformation Potion: exercise extreme caution when using this on yourself or others. You can use this potion through either ingestion or skin contact.**

*Now how should I use this properly?* Dream wondered. He only had what was in the vial - if he went back to the town after today he'd probably be arrested on sight for being too suspicious. It had nearly happened before, and he was not letting it happen again.

The main problem was how to get the potion to people. Dream knew exactly who he was planning on using it on, but he could barely get close to people's houses without being nearly killed on sight. He could try scaring the shit out of Tommy, but the likelihood of the brat even touching what Dream would put the potion on was extremely low. Getting him to eat something poisoned was even less likely.

*Start with someone who wouldn't be inclined to attack you or immediately run away, he thought. His mind ran through the options swiftly - Puffy, Niki, maybe even Technoblade - but he eventually came to one person who would be all too easy to trap. One who he could control without having to manipulate.*

Dream smiled and pulled out his spellbook and flipped to a well-worn, bookmarked page. He'd read the incantation for this spell at least ten times already, practiced it even more so, but this would be the first time he was going to try and actually make contact with his victim.

The dark took over, and a familiar face showed itself opposite of him. Their eyes were wide with terror.

“Ranboo.” He only needed to say the man’s name for him to become responsive. The space around them swirled with dark purple bands of winds, a constant tornado surrounding them.

“Dream,” Ranboo shouted. “What the hell are you doing here?”

"I'm here because I need something from you. Why else would I be here?" Dream made his voice the same playful monotone he often used around the half-enderman.

“What on earth could you possibly want from me now?” he demanded. “Every time this happens, I lose my memories and when I wake up I’ve apparently done something terrible.”

Dream glared at Ranboo through the eye holes in his mask. He pulled out the orange potion, looking at it with a new fascination. What would this do to a hybrid, if it could do that to a human arm?

“Dream, I don’t know why you’re doing this again, but I really don’t like whatever you’ve got in your hand. Can you please just let me go without doing something horrible?”

"Don't worry, Ranboo," Dream said carefully. "I'm just running a little test on you. Besides, that horrible stuff was all you, wasn't it?"

Ranboo paused, clearly trying not to give into Dream's lies. He grinned beneath the shell smooth mask. He walked toward the man and forcefully grabbed his jaw, holding him in place. Ranboo grunted, trying to escape, but Dream's grip was firm.

With the hand holding the potion, he lifted his mask just enough for the lower part of his face to be shown. He grabbed the golden stopper in his teeth and took it out. Ranboo watched as Dream lifted the potion over his head, and his attempts to escape became more frantic.

"Hold still, you idiot," Dream growled through his teeth, "or I might spill some. Just let me put a drop of this on you and then I'll let you go. Besides, this will be interesting to observe."

Ranboo let out a ghastly shriek as the droplet from the potion hit his skin. It sizzled slightly, then as Dream watched, it sank into the skin, leaving an orangey glow where it had been. The

glow vanished, and Dream let go.

"Hey, on the plus side, you get to keep your memories this time!" he said cheerfully. He shoved the stopper back into the bottle and stowed it in his cloak. Ranboo knelt on the ground and looked up at him. Dream watched as Ranboo tried to talk, but he realized this wasn't the Enderwalk's doing.

Ranboo literally couldn't speak.

The enderman hybrid started making raspy gasping noises, as though he was choking on something. The same unease that had come over Dream in the shop hit him again. This wasn't supposed to happen immediately, was it?

He watched on in horror as the person opposing him changed into something he couldn't understand, not quite enderman, but not quite whatever his other half was.

Ranboo kept choking, and after a few moments, he spat something out. It spilled and stretched out across the floor, but instead of laying limp it began flicking back and forth like a snake's tongue. His fingers - no, his entire hand - extended into viciously sharp claws, each one having its own joint where the fingernail had once been, bursting out from under skin and tearing it up near the new joints. The creature grew taller and its legs lengthened, each big toe now tipped with a long, curved claw.

It screeched, and its horns began curling inward, twisting around themselves like someone was turning them consistently in circles, until they tapered off into thin points. The hair became a disheveled mess, no longer pristine like it had been a minute ago. Blood began pooling from somewhere on its body and forming a muddy green-and-red puddle beneath it. It looked up, and pure terror coursed through him like a lightning bolt.

Ranboo's eyes were no longer frightened, no longer a familiar red and green color. Instead they were an unnervingly dark shade of purple, sclera and all, with the only thing of his eyes left that he could see were slitted, pale violet pupils. The skin on the face drew tighter, giving him a gaunt appearance, his lips even stretching up to reveal his gums. The skin on his lips ripped as they were drawn up to reveal the mouth.

The mouth itself was a horror show - the gums were bloody, with rows of uneven, jagged teeth sitting on them. Four fangs stood out, longer than the other teeth. The jaw was stretched and unhinged, tearing the delicate skin connecting the top and lower halves of the jaw. One bit even tore completely in half, with smaller tears within them. On the inside of its throat were rows of more backwards facing teeth, clearly having a purpose but not one he could currently comprehend.

The long, slimy thing it had choked out was not just anything - it was its actual tongue, long enough to reach Dream's feet from six feet away. It slithered and retracted back into the monster's mouth, and he was impressed for a second that it could even fit a six-foot-long tongue in there. Then it stood, and Dream got an unfortunately clear view of where the blood was coming from.

A long, diagonal slash was ripped through the center of the creature's chest, completely opening it up on the other side. Dream had already seen how gaunt and skinny it had become,

but this was worse - the ribs were actually visible, and you could see organs hanging down into the gap blocking some of the way through. The stomach hung like an empty sack, the liver limply lying on the intestines, some of which themselves were spilling from the bottom of the slash and out into open air. On one side, Dream could clearly see the lungs behind the rib cage, inflating and deflating again and again as the creature breathed.

“What the fuck...” Dream whispered to himself. The creature stood to its full height, its extremely long tail flicking back and forth. Spikes had erupted from its back and were dripping with green and red blood, but were a clearly ivory color.

The enderwalk creature made a low, threatening hissing sound, followed by a series of growls. It lowered itself into what looked like a crouching position, its pale pupils locking with Dream’s own eyes.

*Wait a second, Dream thought in alarm. Sharp, jagged teeth, an unhinged jaw, agile fingers, deadly sharp claws, lowering itself down like that... Whatever Ranboo turned into, it's a predatory thing for sure.*

*And I might be it's first meal if I don't get the fuck out of here.*

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Dream looked around his camp, panic filling him as he realized how easily the dark woods around him could hide such a thing. Whoever it had once been, it certainly was no longer the Ranboo everyone knew and loved.

A small pain showed itself in his hand, and Dream looked it over. On the inside of his wrist, there was a small, jagged scratch, bleeding profusely. He swore and brought out his bandages, quickly making sure it wouldn’t bug him too much.

*I just caused another disruption that I need to fix, but this one might be too much for me to fix myself, Dream thought worriedly. Maybe Tubbo, Tommy and Techno could help me with this one. They'll hate me even more because I did it, but surely they're going to want their friend back.*

This was no longer a quest for control. This was an actual emergency, one that could easily wipe out everyone on the server if it didn’t get contained immediately. Dream started packing his things to prepare to meet with Technoblade. If anyone could get him an audience with Tommy and Tubbo, it would be him.

Inside his cloak, the small vial rested gently in the pocket it had been put in for safekeeping. It still read the same thing it had ten minutes ago, but what Dream had failed to realize was that there was fine print on the back, on a separate label. One that he had forgotten to look at closely enough.

*CAUTION! Any injuries caused from infected creatures are highly transmissive of the potions effects. These injuries include but are not limited to: bites, cuts, scratches, and stab wounds.*

# Learning From Mistakes and Making New Ones

## Chapter Summary

Others finally discover what Dream has done a few weeks later.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Ten days later...

“Ranboo? Are you sure you are feeling alright?” Tubbo demanded. His husband hadn’t left bed all day, not even for food. He felt like something was horribly wrong, but he really couldn’t pin down what.

“I’m fine, Tubbo, it’s just a fever,” Ranboo protested, before breaking into a hacking fit.

“You’re not fucking fine, you’ve been confined to the bed for three days and I can’t even let Michael in here because he might get sick too.” Tubbo glared at Ranboo. Married or not, he wasn’t going to let his husband’s sickness stop him from being stubborn.

“Tubbo, I think you’ll be fine to leave me by myself for a few hours.” Ranboo’s usually smooth voice was raspy and harsh. “If you’re really that worried for Michael, you can take him with you. I don’t mind being by myself either.”

“It’s not that I’m worried about what you’ll do, you idiot,” Tubbo protested. “I’m worried about what could happen to you while I’m gone. You might need help while I’m gone and you’ll have to wait for me to get back, or you could get worse-”

“Tubbo, I swear to God, I’m fine,” Ranboo snapped. “Go to the meeting, and take Michael. I don’t want him sick as much as you do.”

“Alright, but you better not do anything stupid while I’m gone.” Tubbo gently closed the door as Ranboo laid his head back onto the pillows.

*Honest to God, one of these days he’s going to get himself killed by insisting he’s fine like that,* Tubbo thought begrudgingly. He walked down the long mansion hallways, his hooves making sharp clicking sounds against the wooden floor. The place was always massive, and even though his family was here, it always felt eerily empty, as though it had been built for more people than just them.

“Michael!” Tubbo called down the massive stairway. As he made his way down, the sound of smaller hooves clicking along the floor reached his ears.

“Yes Papa?” Michael asked, skidding around the corner of the stairway.

“You get to come along with me today to my meeting,” Tubbo said. The little piglin’s eyes lit up with excitement.

“Do you really mean it? I can come with you this time?” Michael exclaimed.

“Yes, I really mean it. Come on, let’s get your snow gear on.” They made their way to the front closet, which was more like an entire hallway. Tubbo walked inside and carefully pulled his son’s snow gear off its hook. Michael continued to babble excitedly as Tubbo put it on him, his non stop chatter becoming distant noise.

Tubbo pulled his own coat over his shoulders, and attached the baby harness Ranboo often used to carry Michael. Tubbo could have easily carried his son in his arms the whole way there, but they were going to be riding a horse, so that wasn’t a good idea.

“Come on buddy. We’ll be taking a horse, so be ready for a bumpy ride. Okay?” Michael nodded and Tubbo put him in the baby harness.

They left the mansion and rode through Snowchester, people waving politely to them as they passed. Tubbo was used to being seen as an authority figure, but not one that many thought of as their equal. He’d done enough undercover poking around to know that people here did really trust him, despite the fact that he made nukes in case of Dream’s return.

They walked toward the north-western side of the wall. With one last glance toward the mansion, Tubbo whipped the horse’s reins and they galloped off into the afternoon.

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The sun had well and truly set by the time Tubbo arrived out at the small cabin. The snow crunched beneath the horse’s hooves, the air was quiet, a chilly breeze was blowing, and somehow, Michael was not asleep.

“Papa, where are we? Is this still part of Snowchester? Who are we going to see?”

“Don’t worry, Michael. We’re here, and you’ll see who we’re going to meet.” Tubbo dismounted the horse and saw a familiar tall figure walking towards them.

“Phil! How are you doing, man?” Tubbo said with a grin. The old man’s face looked somewhat worried, but the spark in his eyes was still there.

“I’m doing okay, Tubbo. How about- Oh, did you bring Michael?” Phil interrupted himself midway through his sentence as he noticed the young Piglin.

“Grandpa Phil!” Michael yelped excitedly. “You’re here too?”

“I kinda live here, bud,” Phil said with a smile, rubbing his hand on the back of his neck.

“HELLO BOYS!” a loud, clear voice echoed from beyond the fence. Everyone looked over and saw Tommy on his skeleton horse, which proceeded to jump over the fence. He rode up to them with his usual big grin, but there were bags under his eyes as though he was stressed.

“Hey king!” Tubbo said with a smile. Michael started excitedly calling Tommy. Tubbo handed him off to his best friend and looked over at Phil.

“Phil, do you know what this meeting is about?” Tubbo asked curiously. “All Techno said was to come here tonight with literally no other context.”

“Not a clue, mate,” Phil said with a shrug. “If I fucking knew I would tell, you but Techno hasn’t said shit to me.” He looked behind Tubbo, as though expecting someone. “Did Ranboo come too?”

“Um, he couldn’t make it,” Tubbo said cautiously. “He’s at home sick, and I didn’t want Michael getting sick either, so that’s why I brought him with me.”

“Oof, that’s gotta suck.” Phil’s face dropped a little. “But it’s a good thing you’re making sure your son is okay. I had to do that with Wil a few times so that he wouldn’t get too sick.” Tubbo nodded as his adoptive father, and he was about to ask another question when Technoblade’s door pretty much slammed open, scaring the life out of everyone present.

“Is everyone here?” Technoblade said quickly. His usually monotone voice had a layer of panic to it, something extremely unusual for the towering piglin. Tubbo quickly took Michael back from Tommy, snapping in the harness again.

“Well, I’m here, so I think that means everyone is indeed here,” Tommy said in a sassy voice.

“Tommy, this is kind of a serious issue. Can you not be an idiot for ten minutes while we have this meeting?”

*Something must be really wrong if he’s snapping at people like that,* Tubbo thought uneasily. In all his years in this land, never once had he seen Technoblade snappy. Sure, he’d seen him angry, he’d seen him sad, but not snappy.

After tying up the horses, they all filed inside, Phil being first and Tommy being last. The inside of the cabin was cozy, if a little cramped. Chests lined one wall, there were two desks shoved up against the walls adjacent to it, and the four huddled in the U-shape of the chests and desks. Technoblade stood in front of the only clear wall, where a ladder going up and down was to his side.

“You’re probably wondering why I called you all here,” Technoblade said carefully. “I did that because someone wanted to talk to you, but they can’t exactly get to most of you guys without getting arrested.”

“What criminal would want to talk to us so badly they needed to come to you for it?” Tommy demanded.

“Well, about that...” Techno said, clapping his hands together. “You may want to prepare yourselves, just don’t attack him. He’s got some pretty bad news and important information, so we do need him alive for now.”

Tubbo drew two knives from the many sheaths on his belt. Tommy pulled out an ax, and Phil drew a sword and stood in front of both of them, his wings open slightly.

A figure darted up the ladder beside Techno and hid behind him, peeking out nervously. Tubbo let a stream of curses loose when he saw who it was.

Dream.

“Why would you want to talk to us, you malevolent green pile of rat shit?” Tommy said. He was trying to be strong, but fear was lacing his voice.

“Techno, why wouldn’t you fucking tell me that we were harboring this asshole in our basement?” Philza shouted. “He’s tried to kill pretty much all of us, and now we’re expected not to try and hurt him back because he’s apparently got some bad fucking news?”

“Guys, look, I know you’re probably pissed with me, but I really do have something important to—”

“Shut the FUCK UP, DREAM!” Tubbo screamed. Michael squealed, and Tubbo realized he’d forgotten temporarily that he didn’t like loud noises. He glared at the masked man behind Techno.

“You are the reason my husband nearly fucking died in that prison break,” Tubbo growled. “So you had better have a good fucking reason as to why you called us here. If not, I’m walking out of this house right now.”

“I swear, it is important!” Dream protested, putting his hands up defensively. “It has to do with Ranboo anyway, so maybe you’ll be a little interested to hear it!”

Everyone froze. They all cared about him, some differently than others, but they did anyway.

“Tell us the bad news first,” Technoblade said. Dream inched away from him nervously.

“About a week after I got out of prison, I was out buying potions and restocking so I could, uh, continue with my plans,” Dream said warily. “In the potion shop I was visiting, there was this one that I’d never seen before and looked like it could help me, so I demanded proof from the shopkeeper that it worked. They did show me proof, and it was pretty solid stuff, so I bought it and told him not to tell the police where I was.”

“I still wasn’t completely sure that it actually worked, and I wanted to test it out. I couldn’t reach any of you easily without getting caught or killed, so I used it on the only person that I could easily get to.”

“I’m going to stop you right there, Dream,” Tubbo snapped. “So you’re telling me that you used a potion on my husband, and *you weren’t even sure it would work the way it was supposed to?*”

“Settle down, Tubbo.” Phil stretched out his mangled wing in front of Tubbo. “We’ll beat the shit out of him later, I promise. But right now we need to know what the hell it did.”

Dream cleared his throat. "I didn't use the whole thing on him - just a drop of it. I was using his enderwalk state, because I thought it would be safer for me in case anything happened and I had to get the hell out. And, well..." Tubbo saw Dream do something he'd never seen before - shudder in fear as something rose to his mind. "It worked. But because of the enderwalk, the process accelerated a lot faster than I thought I would. It changed him... I've never seen anything like it happen before. Then he tried to attack me, and that was when I needed to get out of there. He would have caught me, too, if I hadn't been fast enough."

"*Ranboo* tried to attack you?" Tommy asked disbelievingly. Dream didn't say another word, just shuddered and nodded.

"That's not like him," Phil said.

"I didn't even look him in the eyes," Dream added. "He just went for me."

"Whatever the hell that potion did to him definitely changed him." Technoblade put a hand on the handle of his sword.

"I'd like to see some proof, if you're really telling the truth," Tubbo said. He wasn't about to believe his husband would do something like that, especially not coming from Dream.

But there was something different about Dream. Tubbo couldn't see the malicious cogs in his mind turning, plotting some new scheme with lies and manipulation. The man before him was hunched over, holding himself as though he were scared and there was genuine fear in his voice when he spoke of whatever had happened. Hell, he was even eyeing Phil's wing as though it were more than just a scar, like it would come to life by itself and attack him somehow.

"I do have proof," Dream said shakily. "I will admit I nabbed these pictures from the shopkeeper, but I felt like I might need them."

He moved to one of the desks and laid out a series of seventeen photos. Tubbo quickly scanned the dates to the best of his ability - having dyslexia was never helpful for him. It seemed like two days had two pictures associated with them. Tubbo then turned his attention to the actual pictures, and turmoil rolled through him like a violent hurricane.

Each picture was that of an arm, still attached to whoever was laying on the bed in the photo. The first picture was of a normal human arm. The second one was mostly the same, but the arm looked a little paler.

As they progressed, the arm began to look more and more gray. Scaly skin covering grew on them near the middle of the progression, with needle-like tips on their ends. The hand gradually became clawed and misshapen. The last two pictures, taken on the same day, showed one photo of the arm, a dark gray and strapped to the bed. The second photo was blurrier, but

it showed the camera falling, and whatever the thing possessing that arm moving out of the bed so quickly it was just a gray blur.

“What the hell is that thing?” Tommy demanded. Dream shivered.

“I don’t know, but I do know one thing about them.” Tubbo turned to the masked man, who was trying not to look at Phil’s wing. “They’re predatory. All of the features I saw on Ranboo were those of a carnivore.”

“What features, Dream?” Techno asked sternly. “We’re gonna need a bit more detail than just ‘they’re carnivore traits.’”

“I’ll tell you, but that doesn’t mean you’re gonna like it.” Dream pulled his traveling cloak around himself, but something was off. Tubbo couldn’t pinpoint what, but it made him feel uneasy beyond belief. Michael squirmed in his baby harness, clearly not wanting anything to do with it.

As Tubbo lifted his son out of the harness, Dream started explaining what he’d seen. Sharp teeth and a long tongue inside of an unhinged jaw. Fingers with an extra joint, the claws extending from them, sharp as thorns. Elongated legs, a wiry frame, clearly made to run. Curved ivory spikes running down the back. Massive slash wound through the center of the torso, with visible organs and bones, bleeding like there was no tomorrow.

“And that’s all?” Phil confirmed. Dream nodded vigorously.

“I think,” Technoblade said, “based on the images that we’ve got, along with everything else Dream told us, it takes about fifteen days to transform into one of these creatures.”

Phil turned to Tubbo. “You mentioned that Ranboo was home sick. When did he start seeming ill?”

Tubbo shuddered in realization. “He started coughing ten days ago. Right now he’s too sick to leave the bedroom.”

“There is one issue.” Dream spoke up, looking around. “When I was with him, the enderwalk state accelerated the transformation. What should have taken fifteen days took about a minute there. And in those pictures, they’re of a human. Ranboo isn’t one, and thanks to his enderwalk, it could have been accelerated more than we might expect.”

“I-I have to go back, and see if he’s okay!” Tubbo shouted. Panic was starting to overwhelm him. Ranboo might turn at any second, and he at least wanted to say goodbye if this was how he would go.

“Tubbo, *no*.” Phil said. He put a hand on his shoulder. “If Ranboo is close to turning, then we can’t afford to have anyone else there. You could get badly fucking hurt, and what about Michael? If you bring him back there and it happens, what the hell do you think will happen to your son?”

“Fine.” Tubbo felt his voice waver slightly. “But I want Snowchester evacuated and put on lockdown. Everyone out, nobody back in.”

You can’t be falling apart now, Tubbo, a voice in his mind whispered. You have people that need you to be strong for them. You can’t show them the fact that you’re scared.

"I can send one of my crows to deliver a message." Phil's voice broke his daze. "They're the fastest way we have to get a message to them without someone getting hurt."

"I'll write it," Tubbo said. "If any of you write it, they'll think we're lying. People will believe me if I say there is danger."

"Let's get to it then," Tommy said.

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Tubbo looked back at what he'd written. His dyslexia was never helpful when he needed to write things, and he'd had Tommy help him write some words, but it was done.

Michael was with Technoblade, asking him questions and messing with him. Dream had gone downstairs, apparently taking a closer look at the ingredients of the potion. Phil was waiting for him outside, ready to send a crow to Snowchester.

"Are you sure I've done this right?" Tubbo asked Tommy for the third time.

"Yes, Tubbs, you did it right. Now hurry and get that fucking paper to Phil before people die." Tommy rolled his eyes and clapped Tubbo's shoulder. Tubbo grinned and walked away from the desk.

"Papa! Where are you going?" Michael asked.

"Just to give this message to your grandfather," Tubbo said.

"Can I come?" Michael begged. "Uncle Techno was telling me about how Grandpa has a massive group of crows, and I wanna see 'em!"

"Okay, okay, you can come see the crows!" Tubbo said with a smile. He picked up Michael and headed towards the door, feeling the cold seep through his jacket as he approached.

The outside of the cabin was quiet, not at all busy with preparations. The stars glimmered overhead, the pine trees surrounding the cabin whispering as wind passed between their needles. The snow wasn't fresh, nor was it deep, but it was still fluffy.

"Are you ready to send the message?" Phil asked as Tubbo approached. He was standing beneath a massive oak tree, with a twisting trunk. Strangely, the leaves seemed to move on their own, without any help from the light wind, and they were ebony black.

Tubbo nodded, and Phil let out a sudden, screeching caw. A crow dropped from the tree and landed on Phil's arm and cawed in return.

"You can speak crow?" Michael asked excitedly.

"I am the Crowfather, buddy." Phil grinned at the zombie piglin. "You kinda have to learn to talk to them if they're following you around everywhere. This one in particular is one of my oldest crows."

"Do they have names?"

"Yep! This one's name is InvaderBekk." The bird made another caw and looked curiously at Michael with its dark, glassy eyes. Michael reached out carefully to the crow. InvaderBekk tilted their head, then hopped closer so that Michael could reach them. Michael's eye widened as the crow let him pet it.

"Do they usually let people pet them?" Tubbo asked.

"Some of them will, some of them won't," Phil explained. "They all have their own personalities, names, habits - and there's always those few who don't really do much other than sleep."

"Where are the other crows?" he asked.

Phil simply pointed up at the tree, and Tubbo realized that the leaves were actually feathers, and the movements were thousands of crows, moving and sleeping and hopping along branches.

"They could pass for a real tree," Tubbo noted.

"Whenever they're in danger, they always go here and stop moving. There are a few flaws, like that fact that some of you little shits panic every fucking time I carry a lit torch near the tree!" Phil yelled at the tree of crows, and at least a third of the birds cawed indignantly. He sighed, rubbing the bridge of his nose.

"Despite some of them having a weird fear of fire, I can promise you InvaderBekk is one of my best. They'll get your message to Snowchester in no time."

Tubbo nodded and handed Phil the letter. The older man tied a red string around both the massage and the crow's right talon. He squawked a few times at InvaderBekk, and the bird took off in the direction of Snowchester, its black feathers vanishing into the night almost immediately.

"Are you sure they'll make it in time?" Tubbo asked softly. Worry for his people, for Ranboo, for everything he'd worked so hard to get...

"They may be one of the oldest, but that doesn't mean they're slow," Phil replied confidently. "They'll make it in time, I promise."

The door to Technoblade's cabin opened again, with Tommy in the entrance. A look of worry was resting on his face.

"Guys, we may have another emergency," he called.

"Oh for fucks sake," Phil whispered, "What now?"

"Just come back inside and we'll explain!" Technoblade's response was loud enough to be heard from quite far away, and Tubbo flicked his ear nervously. *Why is he calling us back inside?* he wondered.

The group walked back to the cabin, although Michael was a tad upset that they had to leave the crows behind out in the cold. After Phil reassured the young boy that they would be okay,

Tubbo picked up Michael and carried him inside, holding the door open so that Phil could enter as well.

The moment they were inside, Technoblade slammed the door shut. Dream winced and covered his ears. What's the point of that? Tubbo wondered.

"Tell them right now, Dream." Technoblade's voice was cold and sharp, like an icicle. Tommy hid behind Phil, and Tubbo held Michael closer to his chest.

"There was stupid fine print on the bottle," Dream spat. "I didn't see it before using it on Ranboo. Turns out, the fucking potion effects can be passed through open wounds." Dream pulled up his sleeve, and everyone stepped back. Tubbo quickly covered his son's eye, despite his protests.

Dream's arm had a thin scratch on the inner wrist, healed just enough that it looked like it wasn't a big deal. But the rest of his arm was a horrifying sight.

The forearm looked like it was starting to fall apart, with an indent in the center. It was skinny as all hell, to the point where you could see veins and arteries pulsing under the skin, and the indent was not just an indent - it was an actual hole, and when Tubbo looked closely there was skin and muscle falling off and out.

Tommy cursed, quite fluently, and immediately ran outside. Phil looked like he was going to be sick, and Tubbo couldn't blame him. Seeing that kind of thing was horrifying.

"Ranboo scratched me while I was escaping, and at first I didn't think much of it. As a few days passed, I did start feeling a little weaker, but I still thought it was nothing. It was only once I got here and realized I couldn't lift my sword out of its sheath that I realized something was wrong."

"Well, that some wonderful fucking timing you've got there," Phil snapped. "We've already got Ranboo on the edge of turning into some horrible fucking monster, and now you're revealing that you're infected *five fucking days before you're supposed to go?*"

Tubbo couldn't think anymore. The few thoughts that were circling through his head were all intent on one goal, one tiny thing.

"Phil, could you hold Michael for a bit? I need to step out for a few minutes." Phil looked at him in confusion, but shrugged and took the little piglin from him. Tubbo turned and walked out of the house, a mix of emotions clouding him.

One goal.

One moment.

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Everyone in the cabin was talking. Tommy had come back right after Tubbo stepped out, looking like he'd lost a good bit of his lunch. Phil pulled him into a hug with his still functioning wing, cradling Michael in his arms.

"Dream, why didn't you tell us earlier?" Tommy asked shakily. "We needed to know that."

"I didn't see the fine print until after Phil and Tubbo sent the message. I'm sorry, Tommy." Phil narrowed his eyes at the masked man. He seemed genuinely sorry, but knowing him, he could easily be faking his apology.

He looked at Dream's arm again, and unease crawled through him. *He can't not be sorry*, Phil thought. *He seemed so scared when we got here, like we were going to kill him. And he could barely describe what happened to Ranboo without shaking like a fucking leaf in the wind.*

"What we need right now is a plan," Phil said sternly. "We need to figure out a way to keep this contained. Ranboo's already going to turn, and putting you both in Snowchester won't work out forever. At some point you two will figure out a way to escape. Besides, I doubt Tubbo would approve of quarantining the town for that long, and the likelihood of him being okay with adding Dream into the mix is even less possible."

"Phil, right now that seems like the only way to keep them from hurting people," Techno reasoned. "It's a smarter plan than anything we've got right now."

"I've got an idea!" Tommy shouted. Dream winced at the loud noise. His ears seemed to be oddly sensitive. *Probably has something to do with the potion*, Phil realized.

"Shoot, Tommy," Phil said, readjusting his hold on Michael. "We need all the ideas we can get."

"What if we put them in the room with the Egg?" Tommy said. "It's sealed off, nobody goes down there, which means they couldn't hurt anyone--"

"No, Tommy." Dream sternly declared. "We don't know what happened to the Egg after we sealed it off. Plus, it's unpredictable. We don't know what it will do to us if we go in there. Besides, having us under potion effects and possibly the Egg's influence could be worse than just the potion."

"Well, at least *I'm* contributing ideas, you arse," Tommy snapped.

A tapping sound caught Phil's attention. It was faint, and only lasted a few seconds, but Phil could have sworn he heard it. Michael nestled himself into Phil's arms and returned Phil's attention to the conversation.

"None of these ideas would work for very long," Techno pointed out. "We wouldn't have much time to figure out what the hell's in the bottle before something went wrong. Besides, something usually goes wrong anyway."

The tapping sound returned, but this time it was way louder, and everyone paused to look at one window. Phil looked as well, and he saw at least ten crows pecking at the windowsills

and the glass.

“What the fuck are they doing?” Phil asked.

“You’re the bird man, Dadza,” Tommy said. “You tell us.”

Phil opened the window and let a few birds in, and they all began screeching at him, so quickly and so panicked that he couldn’t understand a word they were saying. Michael looked at the birds with awe, trying to reach out of Phil’s arms to pet them.

“Slow down, what the fuck happened?” Phil demanded. They all stopped, and two birds flew out to wait with the rest of the flock. Everyone in the room looked at Phil in confusion - it was always quite strange when he spoke Crow, even to his own mind.

The remaining crow was one of the birds who kept the rest of them in check, named after his wife. MissTrixtin eyed everyone else, looked carefully at Michael, and spoke. “Tubbo is no longer on the premises.”

“What?” Phil said, a slight panic entering his voice. “What do you mean, Tubbo’s gone? Are you sure he’s not in my house? Or out by the fence?”

“He is not in your house or by the fence,” MissTrixtin stated. “The whole flock saw him take his horse from the stable and ride away.”

Phil could literally feel tension building within him. Michael seemed to sense it, and looked up at him with wide eyes. The seemingly reassuring gaze calmed him a bit.

“Well, which direction did he go? Towards Las Nevadas, the SMP, the Badlands, or towards Snowchester?” A sinking feeling was starting to fill him. Tubbo wouldn’t go back to Snowchester, would he? Not after everything they’d heard?

*He would, Phil realized. Those are his people. That’s his husband. Why wouldn’t Tubbo go back for them?*

“He rode in the same direction as InvaderBekk went, to Snowchester. The flock was panicking and they told us to come here and tell you about it.” MissTrixtin tilted her head, clearly saddened by the news.

“Thank you, Trixtin. Can you please go to try and calm down everyone else? And once they’re calm, send everyone toward Snowchester. We need to get Tubbo away from there as fast as possible, but do not attack him.” The bird nodded and flew out the open window, calling to the other crows as it went.

Phil felt shaken. Of course Tubbo would go back. That was just who Tubbo was - someone who was hard-working and devoted to the task and people he cared about.

“Phil? Is something wrong?” Dream asked warily. “And also, were you actually talking to a bird, or was that for show?”

“Dream, he can actually talk to crows. He’s not called the Crowfather for nothing.” Tommy’s quip brought Phil away from the fear for a moment. He looked everyone in the eyes, and opened his mouth.

“Tubbo’s gone back to Snowchester.”

## Chapter End Notes

Oh noes what will they do

# The First Turning

## Chapter Summary

Tubbo returns to Snowchester, but what he finds isn't what he wanted to find,

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tubbo rode furiously through the forest, nerves spiking and adrenaline pumping. His horse was panting, probably not the best of signs when it came to riding. But he needed to get back. He needed to make sure Snowchester was fully evacuated and that everyone was safe.

*I need to see Ranboo, before he might forget me again. I can't leave him alone through this.*

A screech sounded from above him. It was familiar, and as Tubbo looked up, he saw a black bird fly overhead, headed back in the direction of Phil's house. He quietly prayed to the gods that it hadn't seen him and was on its way to tell Phil where he was.

The horse cried out, and it suddenly collapsed into the snow. Tubbo yelled, rolling as the horse did, and a sharp pain shot through his scarred leg. He cried out, this time in pain as it ran through the sensitive scars.

He looked over, and saw that the horse had landed on his leg. Tubbo grunted and tried to get out from underneath the horse, but the animal was too heavy for him to lift with his one good leg. He couldn't even push it off.

Then the horse abruptly turned to dust, as everything in their world did when it died. The only thing left of it was the saddle and a few scraps of hide. Tubbo scrambled out of the pile of dust, checking his leg. Nothing was broken, but his ankle certainly felt sprained. He grunted as he forced himself to his feet, and started limping in the direction of his home.

*They have to all be out by now. The citizens would take that warning seriously. They'd be long gone before the moon was at its highest.*

A low thundering sound reached his ears. At first, Tubbo thought it was the wind, or maybe a building storm. Knowing how cold these places were, it wouldn't be surprising that one was rolling in tonight. It hadn't snowed in a while.

"Fuck," Tubbo muttered as a cold gust of wind hit him. The thundering sound was getting way louder, and being out in the open for a snowstorm was definitely a bad idea. Tubbo limped as quickly as possible towards a lone spruce tree, the cold starting to set into him.

Then a loud, thunderous caw erupted from behind him. It sounded like a massive murder of crows following behind him.

*Oh shit, he realized. If InvaderBekk had seen him, then they would have immediately told Phil. That, or the other crows had seen him leave. I forgot Phil could talk to them. I should have been more careful than to get on my horse in front of them.*

*Everyone else might be right behind them.*

Tubbo turned, and sure enough, saw a black cloud beginning to breach the tree line, tens of thousands of flapping wings pursuing him like a predator. And possibly behind them were the people who he was trying to get away from for a bit, so he could at least say goodbye.

Knowing how well-prepared Technoblade was, they were all most likely riding on horseback. If Tubbo wanted to make it to Snowchester before they caught up, he would need to run.

Tubbo took off, ignoring his sprained ankle and the shallow snow drifts. Despite everything, he was still one hell of a fast runner - the snow he kicked up was enough to blind his ground pursuers or alert them to his location. At this point he didn't care anymore.

A good five minutes passed, and when Tubbo looked back he could see the crows had fully come over the trees. There were way more on the tree than he had realized, a looming black cloud of beady eyes and shiny feathers. The thunderous flapping had fully overtaken his ears, and the sound of the snow crunching beneath his feet faded away.

He could feel his breath starting to catch, but as he looked up from the blanketed white ground, he could clearly see the roof of the mansion, and the stony gray of the wall surrounding. A closer look confirmed his hopes; Snowchester had evacuated. The message had gotten there in time.

*They're safe. But I still need to see Ranboo.*

What felt like years passed as he approached Snowchester's walls, and his sprained ankle screeched in pain as he put more power into his strides. He was so close. He could make it.

A faint cry rose from behind him. It wasn't a bird call, like how he'd been hearing for the past ten minutes, but a voice, faintly carrying over the wingbeats thundering in his ears. It came again, slightly louder. It was very loud for what seemed nearly a kilometer away. Phil and the others were catching up. He needed to hurry.

*They're definitely on horseback, Tubbo thought. If I can't get to the wall before they catch up then I'm fucking screwed. Phil's not going to let me out of his sight again, Tommy will probably cling to me like glue, and Techno might increase security around the fence to the point where I can't leave.*

Tubbo put the last of his energy into his legs, and kept running. The wall was at least another two minutes away, but on horseback it would only be one. If Tubbo could make it...

He wouldn't be able to. The shouting was starting to get louder, and Tubbo looked behind him. They were closing in, and Tubbo could see the four horses galloping toward him full speed. Tommy was at the front of the group, with Techno, Phil, and Dream following closely behind. Tommy had one arm up to amplify his calls.

A memory rose inside him. He had something to slow them down. Multiple things, actually. But using them would shake their friendship quite a bit.

He needed to do this.

Tubbo pulled out two potions, both of them potions of slowness - the strong ones. He turned and threw one, and they rode right into it. Tommy started yelling in annoyance, and everyone else panicked. Tubbo ran as fast as he could, but he knew the potion effects wouldn't last too long.

One minute away.

A galloping sound approached behind him, and he turned his head to see Phil and Dream riding close behind him.

"Tubbo!" Dream yelled. "Get back here, you dumbass!"

"Listen to the masked asshole for once, Tubbo!" Phil called.

Tubbo didn't want to do what he had to do. He had another slowness potion, but using that could put him at a disadvantage when Techno and Tommy freed themselves of the slowness effect. It felt like a betrayal - like if he took the chance he wouldn't be trustable anymore.

*Ranboo.*

Tubbo pulled a crossbow from his back and stopped for barely a second. If he thought too hard, he wouldn't be able to pull the trigger. So he didn't think. He aimed, he readied himself, and pulled the crossbow trigger.

The crossbow had an enchantment on it - Multishot. The single arrow Tubbo had loaded was split into three, and all three hit their targets. One hit the front leg of Phil's horse.

The other two hit Dream and Phil in the ribs.

Phil and Dream cried out in pain, and they fell off their horses. Far behind them Tubbo heard Tommy and Techno yell in anger. Dream's cry had sounded more high pitched and alien, as though the horrible effects of the potions were already taking too much of a hold over him. Tubbo ran as fast as his legs could carry him. He wasn't stupid, it had been a tactical move - Techno and Tommy would absolutely stop to help Phil. They might patch up Dream as well, which would buy Tubbo more precious time.

The wall was only a few seconds away. Tubbo put the last of his leg power into jumping, throwing a water bucket over his head so that he wouldn't fall to his death. He quickly climbed his way up the wall with the water bucket, scaling it in a few seconds flat. Tubbo stood on top of the massive stone wall, looking behind him to see Techno and Tommy

huddling around their two injured allies. It was strange to think of Dream as an ally, almost revoltingly so, but Tubbo didn't have much time. Techno was already pulling out a healing potion.

Tubbo turned to face Snowchester, and he saw the houses and shops. The windows were dark, not a single candle was left lit, the people gone and fled for their lives. Only one place still had lights on.

The mansion. The chandelier was still brightly lit, but every window except for one was dark as the night sky above. Tubbo took a breath and leaped from the top of the wall.

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Ranboo felt horribly sick. He's been lying in bed all day, unable to muster the energy to get up and find something to eat. He was tired, he was cold, and even with what seemed like twenty blankets piled on top of him, he couldn't feel any warmth coming over him.

And of course, now he felt sick to his stomach too. It felt like his torso was trying to rip itself in half, a pain that could have easily killed him if it was bad enough. Ranboo's jaw was also starting to feel sore, and he couldn't open it without a sharp pang shooting itself through his skull.

He missed Tubbo. He'd said he would only be gone a few hours, but Ranboo really needed him right now. It was always nice to have Tubbo around when he was sick. But this was like nothing he'd ever felt before. Ranboo felt cold and numb, a strangely familiar feeling and yet he couldn't understand why it was familiar.

Damn his horrible memory.

He shivered, and more pain burst through his torso. It was strong, a rip in his body that wasn't supposed to be there.

*I need to get myself medicine. The cabinet with the painkillers was in the bathroom, right?* He couldn't be sure. But he needed to at least try.

Ranboo groaned and forced the heavy blankets off of him. As he did, the pain in his torso came again, stronger than any other time. He couldn't help himself - he cried out, the sound not unlike those produced by normal Endermen. It hurt, more than anything he'd ever felt. Sure, the injuries acquired from the final war for L'Manburg were pretty bad, but he'd been almost unconscious for that. He was wide awake right now.

*Sleeping could make it go away...* Ranboo shook off the thought. Sleeping could make it worse. Or he might go into a coma. He wasn't sure which option was worse.

He forced himself off the bed, every muscle in his body screaming at him not to move, to lay back down. He ignored his body, trying to push through it. For some reason, his eyesight was blurrier than it should have ever been. The colors looked wrong as well, with the dark spruce wood turning from a dark brown to a gray.

Ranboo tried to stand, but his legs were not complying. They shook and before he could even think about what was happening, they gave out and he fell to the ground. The pain in his stomach shot through him, and he cried out again through gritted fangs.

Wait. He didn't have sharp teeth. He ran his tongue over them, each one growing into sharp points. Something was seriously wrong.

*Is something wrong with me? Ranboo wondered. Is this what happens when Endermen get really sick? Am I dying? Maybe this is what happens when Enderwalk malfunctions?*

He couldn't be sure anymore. He groaned as more pain shot through him, wishing with all his might that it would go away, that it would torment some other person so he could be rid of it.

Ranboo thought he heard something - the sound of hoofs, powering up the stairs. He really wished his husband was back, but the likelihood that he was hallucinating was far greater.

Then their bedroom door burst open, and Ranboo looked up, barely aware of himself through the throbbing pain. Tubbo stood in the doorway, and his husband's eyes immediately found him on the floor.

"RANBOO!" Tubbo shouted. He dove into the floor and pulled Ranboo into a hug. Ranboo hugged him back, but another wave of pain made him grimace and hold his arms around his stomach instead.

"Holy fuck, I am so, so sorry," Tubbo said. He was nearly crying from the way his voice was strained. "I shouldn't have left you. I should have been here for you."

"It's okay, Tubbo," Ranboo winced. "Although I would have appreciated the help."

"Now is not the time for fucking around, Boo," Tubbo snapped. "Are you okay?"

"What do you think?" Ranboo said. Something was wrong with his voice. It was more growly, and he could feel something changing in his throat. His jaw stung like fury.

"I'm here now, I can help you—" Tubbo cut off as Ranboo let out a shriek. The pain in his stomach was reaching its peak, and Ranboo shrieked again. Tubbo looked on in dismay and panic.

Then he felt it. Something in his body started ripping, tearing, and it felt like it was cutting him open from the inside out. Ranboo's eyes widened for barely a moment, then he leaned into Tubbo and screamed, the pain making him cry rivers of tears.

He could no longer think straight, all his thoughts were shattered and flying around his mind like broken glass. The tears burnt him, and he felt his skin sizzling. The ripping sensation continued, building its way out from inside. His screams became louder, and he gripped Tubbo's arms as the pain made its way to his skin. Ranboo's nerves were on fire, and he could somehow even feel thousands of them splitting, thin wires connecting everything in his body being ripped and torn into smaller threads.

Then the skin tore. His screams grew ever louder, and he could barely sense Tubbo tensing up as his flesh ripped itself open, the muscles and inner organs being exposed to open air. Blood seeped between his arms, staining the wood below with red and green blood. The sensation withdrew and ripped instead through his back, repeating the process much faster.

Ranboo screamed into Tubbo's chest. The pain was nearly unbearable, and he wasn't sure if he could take any more of this torture. The pain of the tears running down his face was nearly invisible where it had hurt like fury before.

The sensation finally stopped, but the pain stayed. It faded into a dull throbbing, but still ever present within him. Tubbo laid a scarred hand on Ranboo's head, running it through his disheveled hair and whispering something he couldn't understand.

He heard more footsteps coming up the stairs, but this time it seemed like there were multiple. Ranboo listened closer. Four people.

Something in his head was changing. It emerged from the depths of his mind, clawed its way out, and started to spread through him like spilled ink on a page. It reassembled the fragments that were flying wildly around in his head, and for a moment Ranboo was grateful to this unknown thing, helping him regain his sanity after all the pain and torture.

But then he sensed the intention change. It started taking over, eating his thoughts, his remaining memories, his mind entirely. Ranboo tried to hold onto them - they were the only pieces of himself that would never be worth losing.

The thing ate him up, like words on an ink-stained page. Ranboo's consciousness reached for the last bit of light left in him -

Then the thing swallowed him whole.

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"TUBBO!" Phil yelled up the stairs. His ribs ached from the arrow Tubbo had shot at him - Techno had used a healing potion the moment he and Tommy had caught up. Surprisingly, he'd used one on Dream as well, despite the situation.

There was a muffled keening sound coming from upstairs. Phil couldn't figure it out, but his mind was swirling with horrible ideas of what could be happening.

Then the sound stopped. Everyone else, who had clearly heard it too, looked around in confusion. Dream carefully pulled his mask up so he could see better, and Techno perked one ear to try and find it again. Tommy merely looked around in pure confusion, his battle ax drawn and gripped firmly in his right hand.

Then a scream of pain shattered the eerie silence. Phil immediately ran up the stairs, with Tommy close behind. It went on like a siren, occasionally hitching as whoever was making the sound caught their breath, and it immediately started up again.

“TUBBO!” Phil yelled again. He ran down one hallway and saw a set of double doors broken off of their hinges.

*No. no. Tubbo is not dead.*

Phil ran to the doorway, panic coming in wave after wave. Dream was second to reach the doorway, quickly followed by Tommy and Techno. Everyone tensed as they saw the scene before them.

Tubbo was kneeling on the floor, crying and running his scarred hand through Ranboo’s hair. He was unharmed - Thank the gods, Phil thought - but Ranboo was a different story.

He was the one who had been screaming, and he was still going, muffling the sound again in Tubbo’s chest. His hands were closed in almost a death grip around his husband’s arms, and Phil could see a river of blood filled tears dripping onto the floor below him.

*Too much blood, he’s losing too much blood,* Phil’s thoughts sang. *There shouldn’t be so much blood from just his tears.* And indeed, the dark spruce wood around them both was nothing but a puddle of green and red blood.

Dream started to shake, turning away from the scene he was apparently already too familiar with. Tommy shuddered and hid behind Phil, barely peeking out to see what was happening. Techno was still, only his eyes portraying his grief.

“We should leave,” Dream whispered fearfully. “This isn’t safe. There is way less of a risk of anyone else getting infected if you guys get the hell out.”

“Are you out of your fucking mind, Dream?” Tommy snapped. “That’s my best friend’s husband, and my friend too. I’m not gonna leave him here to suffer through the shit that you started!” Tommy darted into the bedroom and kneeled next to Tubbo, enveloping both other people in a hug.

Phil’s mind was whirling, trying to make sense of what to do. *If we leave now, we’re leaving an innocent to suffer through a terrible fate by themselves. But if we stay, we might all end up the same way.* His parental instincts were telling him to go in and comfort Ranboo along with Tubbo and Tommy, but every rational part of him blocked it off. Doing that could be deadly.

Another, less common, feeling rose inside him. His duty, his oath to his wife. To be her Angel of Death. Thanks to his marriage to Death, he could sense when someone was about to pass on. His friend was teetering right on the edge of it, close enough that he could easily die.

Techno walked up behind him and put a hand on his shoulder. “Dream is right, Phil. We need to leave before he’s fully gone. Otherwise we could be screwed too.”

“NO.” Tubbo snapped. “I’m not going to leave him like this. I’m not making that mistake again.”

“Tubbs, please, you know what could-” Tommy started, but a deathly glare from his friend silenced him.

“Tubbo.” Phil kept his voice as firm as possible. “We need to go before we all get infected. Say your goodbyes, and then we ride back to Techno’s place.”

“I’ll stay,” Dream said out of the blue. Everyone turned to look at him with suspicion. “I’m going to turn in five days anyway, so what would the point in me going back be? Besides, there’s a kid in Techno’s house, and I’ve never been good to kids.”

A hissing sound filled everyone’s ears. Phil whipped his head toward Ranboo, still bleeding on the floor.

“Go...” the hybrid hissed. That was odd. Endermen couldn’t hiss. Realisation hit Phil like a thunderbolt.

“Guys, we need to get the fuck out, right now. He’s turning, and fast. Tubbo, I don’t give a fuck anymore. Get away from Ranboo.” It hurt Phil to say that - Ranboo was his friend as well as Tubbo - but this was bad.

“Phil, I already told you I’m not going to leave him again!” Tubbo shouted. “He’s my husband, and I can’t let him go like this!”

“TUBBO!” Tommy backed away from Ranboo, shooting behind Phil quickly.

Ranboo was twitching, and strange noises that were between growls and coughs came from him. Phil watched in horror as ivory spikes short through his back, ripping the skin. The sound of bones breaking and being reset filled the hallway.

Ranboo looked up to Tubbo, his red and green eyes strangely desperate. Through the noises, everyone made out two words: “*GO! NOW!*”

“RUN!” Techno shouted, and everyone took off through the mansion. Phil’s legs ached, and his ribs did as well, but adrenaline filled him and he only had one goal: get away.

The thunder of feet beside him filled his ears as they burst through the door. Behind him, a loud, horrifying screech echoed through the mansion. It made him want to run as fast as possible, as far as his legs could carry him. The group burst out of the mansion, but there was something immediately wrong.

“Where’s Dream?” Techno asked. “He can still get hurt.”

“WHAT DO YOU MEAN, WHERE’S DREAM?” Tommy screamed. “TUBBO ISN’T HERE EITHER!”

“Tommy, wait-” Phil stopped himself and grabbed Tommy firmly by the wrist before he could run back inside. The horrifying screeches were increasing in volume, but another sound came through the door. A high pitch scream, louder than the rest.

Tommy cried out and tried to struggle from Phil’s firm grip, and Techno quickly grabbed him and helped Phil hold him back. Tears were running down his face as the scream came again.

Dream stumbled out of the building, panic on his face. Something looked off with his mask.

“I’m sorry, guys,” he said. “Ranboo’s gone. He turned.”

“WHERE THE FUCK IS TUBBO!?” Tommy yelled. “WHY WOULD YOU LEAVE HIM BEHIND? YOU KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING, YOU WERE ACTUALLY BEING FUCKING HELPFUL FOR ONCE-”

“Tommy, that’s enough.” Phil snapped at him, even though he didn’t enjoy doing it. The boy ignored him.

“WHY SHOULD WE TRUST YOU AFTER THIS FUCKING STUNT?” Tommy’s cries of rage turned to crying. He stopped struggling against Phil and Techno’s grip, and leaned into Phil’s wings. A muffled sobbing came from him.

“Tommy, please.” Dream’s voice was dead quiet. “I’m so sorry. I wasn’t thinking rationally, and I thought he was going to take the goddamn hint that Ranboo was turning.”

Techno whispered something, and Phil turned to him. His mind was still reeling from the fast dash out of the mansion and from seeing one of his friends - hell, he would even say kid - turn into a monster right before his eyes.

“What did you say, Techno?” Phil asked.

“‘Til death do us part,” the piglin repeated. “Ranboo mentioned saying that to somebody once during one of our meetings.”

“Tubbo mentioned saying that to Ranboo as well,” Phil said. A small, grim smile split his face. “I suppose they just fulfilled that promise.”

## Chapter End Notes

I genuinely cried writing this chapter, so uh yeah. I hope you enjoy it

# The Unsoundness of Grief

## Chapter Summary

After the horrific events of the mansion, Tommy's mind is thrown in every direction.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy couldn't process anything. Ranboo was gone. Tubbo was gone. And somehow, against all the fucking odds, Dream was the one who got out of the mansion alive.

*He's already infected. He should have stayed there. If he wasn't gonna stay, then the bitch should have at least tried to save Tubbo.*

Tommy barely heard the screams, the talking happening between everyone else. His own sobs filled his ears, and hot tears ran down his face like raindrops on a window. His heart squeezed and twisted painfully, and his mind threw up memory after memory of Tubbo and Ranboo.

*Tubbo and Tommy sitting on the bench together once more after the final confrontation with Dream, a disc playing in a jukebox beside them.*

*Tommy and Ranboo wandering the server, playing pranks and causing the occasional explosion.*

*Showing the caves of Pogtopia to an unscarred, excited Tubbo.*

*Talking to Ranboo about Dream, expressing his fear.*

*The mansion. The bedroom. Being pulled away from his best friends on the server. Ranboo bleeding out, Tubbo crying, both of them screaming.*

Tommy couldn't bear to think about them. It hurt him to know what happened and every resurfacing memory was like a glass knife plunging itself into his mind, his soul, his heart. Over and over and over.

“Tommy?” Phil whispered gently in his ear. “We need to leave. Dream is to stay here, but we have to go before Ranboo can make it out of the mansion.”

Tommy nodded, a sniff escaping him. “Please don’t say his name, Phil.”

The older man nodded, as though he understood perfectly where Tommy was coming from. He wouldn’t be able to understand, ever. Phil hadn’t fought wars with them. He hadn’t shared

those few peaceful moments between the chaos, where they simply sat and spoke.

He didn't know how this felt.

*I should have fought harder to get Tubbo to come with us, Tommy thought, because maybe if I had, he wouldn't have lost his last life. That's surely what happened.*

Techno and Phil said their goodbyes to Dream, while Tommy stood in the shadow of Phil's good wing glaring in stony silence. The masked man turned to him, and took it off.

"Tommy, before I lose the chance, I do want to say that I'm sorry." Dream's face fell. "I was scared of losing whatever grip I had on the world, and I took that out on everyone. You in particular suffered the worst of it. I wasn't in a good state of mind, but that will never excuse my actions. So, I hope you can fix this mess that I started before it gets out of control."

Before Tommy could say anything - not that he really wanted to say anything to the bastard - Dream turned and walked back into the mansion. The man took one last look outside, and closed the doors. Tommy faintly heard blocks being placed on the inside of the door, and figured that Dream had placed obsidian to block off the door.

And just like that, Dream, Ranboo, and Tubbo were locked away, sealed inside a dark tomb of wood and stone.

And hopefully, the curse that Dream had released on the world, would stay locked away in the tomb with them.

As Phil, Techno, and Tommy left the town, Techno threw an ax at the rope holding up the sturdy wooden gates of Snowchester, and it fell to the ground so fast that it threw up a massive cloud of snow. Tommy watched as it settled while Phil untied the horses. Every snowflake that fell onto the snow felt like another part of him falling away.

*Memories are always in your mind, but once they're gone... Tommy sighed and wiped his still teary eyes. Well, a drop of water in the ocean is rarely seen again.*

"Tommy," Phil said, placing a hand on his shoulder. He jumped slightly, the unexpected touch jarring him out of his daze. "You'll get through it. You're a strong man. You've pulled through a lot of things, and you will get through this. Okay?"

Tommy looked up at him. To his surprise, Phil's eyes were watering too. He'd only ever seen Phil cry once - after he'd killed Wilbur back in L'Manburg. Admittedly, he had also cried when he reached Wilbur, but only Phil and Techno knew that.

"Let's go back, Phil." Tommy felt the coldness in his voice. "I don't want to be around Snowchester anymore."

"That's understandable," Phil said, handing Tommy the reins of his skeleton horse. Tommy leaped on without another word.

Techno ensured they all had everything they needed before they left - giving the monsters weapons, if they could even use them, could end in catastrophe. They rode at a slow walk,

and nobody said anything as the stone walls disappeared from the horizon behind them. Tommy's mind was still doing somersaults from everything. He felt a feeling that he'd never been able to name, even though he knew its name better than his own.

A new thought popped into his head, and a panic set in over him.

"SHIT. Guys, what are we going to tell Michael?" Tommy burst out. Phil swore, and Techno looked up as though praying to whatever gods could see them that this would be over already.

"You're right, what are we gonna tell him?" Phil said worriedly. "We can't just tell him his parents are the equivalent of dead - that would destroy him."

"No duh, Phil," Techno deadpanned. "Michael's a one year old. Nobody should just have that said straight to their face at that age. What else would you say, that they've gone to meet your wife?"

"That's... That's actually a great idea, Techno," Tommy said. "Tubbo and Ranboo have never met Phil's wife, so It would actually work. To be completely fair, I've never met her either."

"That's what we'll say." Phil's mind was made up, and Tommy could see it in the way he held himself on the horse. "We'll tell him that his parents went to meet my wife. Her name's Kristen, if you really didn't know."

Out of the corner of Tommy's eye, he noticed Technoblade stiffen slightly. He wasn't sure why hearing the name of Phil's wife would make him uneasy, but apparently it had.

The wing beats of crows filled everyone's ears as they approached the tree where Phil had left them, just as Snowchester disappeared behind a white hill. The bird who had told them about his friend leaving flew down from the tree and perched on Phil's shoulder, cawing at him as the rest of the flock took to the air. The two started conversing as they rode, but Tommy couldn't hear them over the sounds of the birds and the crunching snow beneath the horses hooves.

*Not that you can understand what they're saying anyway.* His thoughts were beginning to stop swirling, but he still felt numb. The shock kept pummeling him, like relentless punches to the gut.

-+=-

They rode until the sun rose over the tall spruce trees, brushing the thin green needles with soft golden light. The snow glimmered gently, each flake sparkling like small fires on the ground. They were too joyful, too bright and happy for the previous day's events. Tommy watched as Technoblade glared at it, as though directing enough of his anger would be enough to stop it from shimmering happily.

The bright shine of the snow felt so, so wrong. The gentle, cool breeze whispering between the trees carried his guilt and fear on their slim, mellow tendrils, carrying them into Tommy's ears.

Phil dismounted his horse first, leading it into the stables beside Technoblade's house. He then took the saddle off, and rushed quickly into Techno's house, probably to check on Michael. Tommy indifferently repeated Phil's actions, and eventually his mind wandered into a thick fog, and he barely heard as Technoblade came up behind him.

He put his hand on Tommy's shoulder, shaking him out of his daze. He looked at the tall piglin, but no thoughts crossed his mind. Where he might have once thought things like, *Oh my God, the Blade put his hand on my shoulder!* or *Why is he here, with Phil?* There was simple, quiet nothing. He couldn't think about those things of Techno anymore, not after the horror show that was the mansion.

A high pitched, crying squeal came from inside. A worry rose inside Tommy. Did Michael get hurt on something?

He rushed inside with Techno in close pursuit. Phil was kneeling in front of Michael, a panicked look in his face, while tears ran down the young boy's face.

Techno picked him up with surprising care - Tommy hadn't known he could be so gentle.

"What did you tell him, Phil?" Tommy asked.

"I told him exactly what I said I would say!" Phil exclaimed. "I told him in Piglin so he wouldn't get confused, but once I said Kristin's name he started crying."

"Phil," Techno said carefully. "Tell me exactly what you said."

A few moments passed before Phil said anything, and Tommy listened in confusion to the grunts and snorts that were the Piglin language. Phil was fluent in a lot of things, but Tommy was barely good at any languages Phil had tried to teach him.

A couple of weird sentences later, Technoblade's eyes were filled with sympathy and annoyance. "Phil, maybe next time when you tell him big things, talk in English, okay?"

"What did I say wrong, though?" Phil asked. "I would probably handle it better if I knew what I did to offend you two so deeply."

Technoblade sighed, and Tommy leaned back against the wall, listening, but also not really listening.

"Phil, the name 'Kristin' in Piglin roughly translates to 'Chrystinin' in English."

"Okay, and?"

"Chrystinin is our race's name for the Goddess of Death. You pretty much told Michael that his parents just died. To his face. Like we agreed *not* to do."

"Well, shit," Tommy muttered.

"Tommy, can you hold him?" Techno asked quickly. "He's not very happy with me or Phil right now." Without any warning, Technoblade dropped Michael into Tommy's arms, and

Tommy nearly dropped him, but managed to get a good hold on him before he fell.

Tommy took Michael outside while Techno and Phil spoke about what to do. Honestly, holding Michael reminded him deeply of his lost friends. He felt himself tearing up again, but ignored it as best as he could. Michael sniffled and whimpered into Tommy's jacket.

"Tom," Michael whispered. He was barely audible over the breeze blowing in Tommy's ears. "Papa and Dad didn't really go see Crystinin, did they?"

"No, no no," Tommy reassured him. "Phil's wife's name is Kristin. He didn't mean that they went to see your Crystinin, okay? Phil just mispronounced what he said."

"How long will they be meeting her?" Michael asked, wiping his eyes.

Tommy hated lying to kids - it reminded him too much of what Dream had once done to him. But this time, it was necessary. "Kristin lives very, very far away, so it could take a long time."

Michael settled himself into Tommy's arms, nodding to himself. "At least I have you and Grandpa Phil. And Uncle Techno."

*We might be all he has left after this,* Tommy thought sullenly.

They stayed on the porch for a few minutes, watching as the sun rose slowly over the snowy horizon. A small idea sprung to Tommy's mind, to hopefully comfort Michael. And himself.

He looked around the small compound, and spotted a bench near the edge of the fence where the sun was rising. He walked over, put Michael on the bench, and placed down a jukebox and his enderchest

"What are you doing?" Michael asked quietly.

"You'll see, buddy." Tommy pulled out two discs - the discs. The ones that so many wars had been one with, started over, lost and taken back and stolen. He brushed off the surface of Cat, and gently put it into the jukebox.

The gentle beeps and tones of the music disc rose and fell as Tommy sat down next to Tubbo's son, who was slowly nodding his head to the rhythm. Tommy let a small, sad smile across his face as the music filled the cool morning air.

## Chapter End Notes

I know this is a shorter chapter but that's because I had to divide up this chapter into two parts to ahve it make more sense and also not be a mile long. Next update will be longer!

# Broken Wood and Blood

## Chapter Summary

After two long weeks of keeping an eye on the now ghostly town of Snowchester, something goes awry when a new visitor arrives.

## Chapter Notes

### **HUGE TRYPOPHOBIA WARNING FOR THIS CHAPTER, IF IT'S SOMETHING YOU'RE SENSITIVE TOO YOU MAY WANT TO SKIP SAM'S SEGMENT**

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Two weeks passed, and as they did, Phil, Techno, and Tommy would take turns keeping watch over Snowchester. Tommy never enjoyed these watch periods - he got stationed there for an entire day to just watch a stupid mansion that nobody ever went into or came out of. Sure, the occasional loud noise or high-pitched screeching would come from within the walls of the wooden structure, but those always managed to time themselves for when he was off shift.

Maybe the monsters favored Phil and Techno over Tommy. He wouldn't know.

Michael had adjusted to life at Techno's cabin, believing the lie that Ranboo and Tubbo had gone to meet Phil's wife. He was no longer scared of Steve, Techno's polar bear, and always kept himself busy entertaining the animals on the compound. Phil's murder of crows had taken one hell of a liking to him, since he kept sneaking them treats when he wasn't supposed to.

Tommy always had to help with chores around the perimeter - chopping firewood, hauling stone, building small things and helping cook the food. It was extremely annoying, but Technoblade had pretty much forbidden any excursions beyond 100 blocks of the fence. So doing anything that was even in the slightest interesting was out of the question.

"Tommy!" Phil called. "I'm going on watch for today, so can you handle loading up the chests with supplies?"

"Yeah, yeah, I can," Tommy yelled back, unzipping his winter coat as Phil mounted his horse and jumped the fence. He spotted the large bags of stones and piles of wood left by the edge of the fence and groaned. There was so much stuff to move!

“Uncle Tommy!” Michael cried from the bird tree. “Look how high I can climb! The crows are helping me too!”

Tommy turned around to see Michael nearly halfway up the silvery, birch tree, with the crows squawking and helping direct the small boy.

“Holy shit-” Tommy swore. “Michael, please climb a little lower! Phil will kill me if literally anything bad happens to you.”

“Okay, Uncle Tommy!” Michael called.

In addition to doing a lot of chores, Tommy was mainly responsible for taking care of Michael, considering that he was one of the few people the boy was comfortable around right now.

As he walked over to the massive pile of logs and cobblestones, he thought he heard a twig snap in the trees. Tommy immediately looked over in panic - it hadn't taken long for the fear of one of the creatures escaping to instill in him.

But nothing was there. He looked as hard as he could through the trees and between the frost covered needles, but he couldn't see anything. It unnerved him, but he turned back to the logs.

As he picked up a large stack of them, another, louder twig snap sounded through the bushes. Tommy whipped his head around, but he still couldn't see anything.

“Michael!” Tommy called, feeling fear rising in him like an insidious tidal wave. “You can climb higher if you want to now!”

“Thank you!” Michael called.

Tommy wasn't just letting him climb higher - by doing that he was putting Michael further out of reach if something really was about to burst out of the trees. He put down the spruce logs and pulled out his ax, eyeing the trees warily.

He had a horrible aim, but maybe throwing his ax would warn off any intruders. He could run quickly and get Technoblade, but that would mean leaving Tubbo's kid by himself. If he shouted, the thing in the trees might attack him before he got a chance to call out.

Tommy raised his ax, readying himself to throw it, when a voice called out from the trees.

“Tommy! Don't throw, I come in peace!”

The familiar deep voice calmed him, and Tommy breathed a sigh of relief. It was just Sam, probably coming to make sure he was alright. Sam had been the only person he'd told about going to meet Technoblade, and considering their history, it was probably not a good thing that he was here.

“What are you doing here, Sam?” Tommy asked warily.

“Checking up on you,” Sam replied simply. “And also looking for Dream. We were getting sightings of him up until two weeks ago, and he’s completely vanished off of the map. I have a feeling he went to his old friend for help.”

Tommy felt himself tense. Every day since Dream had locked the disastrous curse in the mansion, he’d had to stop himself from drowning himself in grief, stop himself from counting the days that had passed. Counting how many days it would have been if Tubbo was infected instead of dead.

*He’d be fully gone by now, Tommy caught himself thinking. It’s been fifteen days - he would be one of them by now.*

Tommy realized something. If he told Sam where Dream really was, Sam would take guards out in mass force to recapture him. Which could lead to releasing the curse again, which hadn’t been difficult to initially contain, but could easily become so if they were released.

So many people could get killed. So many people could die.

Tommy couldn’t tell Sam where Dream was.

“Sam, I promise you, I’ve been here for the past two weeks and I haven’t seen the green bastard anywhere on this compound. Techno would have told me if he was keeping the asshole here.”

“How do you know he isn’t fucking with you?” Sam said sternly.

“Because whenever he and Phil aren’t here, I’m always nosing through their things. Plus, I know every nook and cranny of this place from my time in exile, so I’m pretty sure I’d know if he was around. That, and he’d be leaving creepy messages and shit absolutely everywhere.”

Sam sighed. “Could you at least try to give me a location of where he might have last been?”

Tommy tensed. “I... I can’t Sam. I really can’t.”

“Why can you not?”

“I JUST CAN’T, SAM, OKAY?” Tommy’s voice rose to a sudden shout. All this talk of Dream’s past deeds was getting to him. “SOMETHING AWFUL IS HAPPENING AND I CAN’T TELL YOU BECAUSE YOU MIGHT TRY TO FIND HIM AND KILL HIM AND THEN YOU MIGHT FUCKING DIE INSTEAD!”

“Uncle Tommy, why are you yelling?” Michael called from the top of the tree. He started climbing back down.

*Shit, Tommy thought. This is just getting worse by the second. Sam’s probably going to ask where his parents are, and then I’ll have to make up an excuse.*

“Why is Michael here?” Sam asked, exactly along the lines of Tommy’s thinking. “Where are Tubbo and Ranboo?”

"They went to meet Phil's wife, Kristin," Tommy said, using the same excuse that they had with Micheal. "She lives pretty far away, and they wanted to leave him with people who could help him get more comfortable with the outside."

The lies burned his tongue, and he hated it. Lying was what had gotten them into this mess.

Sam nodded. "Sensible of them, then. Not sure why they picked Techno instead of Eret, though."

Tommy heard the door to the cabin open and Technoblade suddenly shouted. "MICHAEL, WHY ARE YOU SO HIGH UP IN THE TREE?"

"It's amazing up here!" Michael's voice echoed from way too far overhead. Tommy and Sam looked over to the tree of crows to see the small piglin nearly at the top of the tree.

"Should he be that high up?" Tommy asked nervously.

"He's gotten into more dangerous situations when he was with Eret," Sam said coolly. "He nearly broke an arm trying to jump out a two-story window once, and the only reason he didn't was because Eret managed to catch him as he fell."

"Please tell me you never actually told his parents that part."

"I told them."

"Then how is Eret not dead?"

"I have no clue, Tommy. But Michael's a tough little guy - he'd probably live through falling out of two trees."

"MICHAEL, PLEASE GET DOWN FROM THERE!" Techno yelled.

"Be down in a minute!" Michael called back. Tommy watched as the small pink figure that was the young piglin boy started moving down the tree. Technoblade looked away, toward Tommy. His eyes narrowed as he spotted the creeper next to Tommy, and he started storming toward them.

"Well, I'm in some deep shit now," Tommy muttered.

"Sam, why are you here?" Technoblade snapped as he approached. The stress of all the watch shifts clearly was getting to him, along with being the only person who was studying the potion thoroughly. Tommy couldn't blame his snappiness - it was getting to him too.

"No need to be hostile, Technoblade." Sam's voice was gruff. "I'm just here looking for Dream. Tommy said he wasn't here, but I really couldn't be sure until I asked you."

A small twinge of annoyance passed through him. Was he really so untrustworthy?

"I can assure you, Sam, Dream is not here." Techno's monotone voice was cold. "He isn't here. Why do you ask?"

"He went off the radar completely after the first week out of prison, and zero sightings have been reported since then. You're the only other person who tries to stay off the radar, so I wanted to verify with you."

"I told you once, and I will tell you again, Dream is not here. I haven't seen him since I broke him out." The way he spoke was so convincing that even Tommy would have believed him if he hadn't known the truth. And yet he would rather believe the lie instead of knowing the haunting, horrible truth.

"Could you at least point me in the direction he ran to after you broke him out?" Sam demanded tiredly. "It would really take the pressure off my back. Everyone hates me because I let him escape."

*No, Tommy thought rebelliously. I hate you because you let him escape and nearly killed one of my best friends. You never needed to do that.*

"The last I saw him, he was heading up toward Las Nevadas. That's all I can really tell ya," Techno said calmly.

"Thank you for the information, Techno. I appreciate it. I may as well check Snowchester while I'm headed up that way."

*No, Tommy thought. Not Snowchester. Don't go there.*

He voiced this as well, apparently, shouting it out loud. Sam looked at him oddly, while Techno looked panicked.

"Why shouldn't I go there?" Sam asked, a hint of suspicion in his voice.

"Sam, please, you don't understand." Fear flooded Tommy, and he felt his voice start shaking. "Snowchester is really dangerous right now, and there's something happening there--"

"Tommy, stay calm," Technoblade said.

"HOW THE FUCK AM I SUPPOSED TO STAY CALM AFTER THAT SHIT?" Tommy screeched.

"Technoblade, I think you need to explain to me why the hell Tommy is so scared," Sam hissed. He pulled his trident from behind his back. "Now."

Tommy barely heard as Techno invited Sam inside. The emotions that had been stewing inside him for the past two weeks rose up again, throwing up scarring images, and he felt tears running down his face as he started to sob again.

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Sam looked around the cabin. It was cramped for him, considering his height. Michael attached himself to Tommy, comforting him as he cried.

He felt unease by Tommy's fear of Snowchester - it was one of the few places in the world that should have been safe for him, where he should have been happy to go to. Hell, his best friends were supposed to be there.

*It seems like he's too scared to even think about that place. What I need to know is why.*  
Sam's thoughts were focused now, intent on discovering what had happened.

"Okay, Technoblade," Sam said coldly. "You have five minutes to explain what the hell happened to Tommy, starting now."

"It didn't just affect Tommy, to be fair," Technoblade said quietly. His firm voice was oddly uneasy. "Dream did come to me about fifteen days after the prison break. He was really shaken up, he was scared, and he was eyeing the trees around my house like they were going to attack him. I've never seen Dream of all people spooked like that before, so I brought him in and asked him to tell me what was wrong. He wouldn't say a word, just told me to get Tubbo and Tommy here as fast as possible. I wasn't sure, but he was pretty much begging by that point."

Sam felt shocked. In all his years on the server, never once had he seen Dream truly scared. Sure, there had been times where Dream would scream because he'd gotten ambushed by a skeleton or a creeper, but the kind of scared Technoblade was describing was not anything he'd ever seen.

*He's probably lying about that, trying to throw me off track.*

An hour passed as Technoblade described the events of the past weeks, covering Tommy and Michael's ears whenever a sensitive part of the story came up. By the end, Sam felt horrified. All of this had happened in one of the safest places on the server? Right under his nose?

That familiar sense of responsibility and guilt for Dream's actions resurfaced inside him. It was familiar because it was something Dream himself had instilled in him during his time in the prison. It was there, lurking beneath his surface, and he felt the smoke emitting from his gas mask become thicker.

"Sam, look, I can understand if you're pissed, but if you're going to blow something up, do not blow up my house. Maybe go set a tree on fire instead."

Sam literally felt like a mess now. He should have tried harder to get Dream back into Pandora's Vault. Dream was his responsibility anyways. The guilt-filled thoughts flooded him, making him tense.

A small pair of arms latched on to Sam's leg. He looked down to see Michael, who was gazing up at him serenely. Another wave of anger flooded Sam. Dream's actions had just left this kid an orphan in a cruel world. He needed to find this guy before he caused even more damage.

"Where is Snowchester from here?" Sam demanded. Technoblade's eyes widened in disbelief.

“Did you not hear a word I said?” he snapped. “I just told you he locked himself in there with them so that he wouldn’t pass it on. I don’t care that you’re the prison warden or if you have hyper-powerful armor, going there is a suicide mission.”

“If we lock them in the prison, it would be more effectively contained.” Sam had a plan. If he found these things, he could maybe lock them up inside Pandora’s Vault and contain this weird virus potion while they figured out a cure.

“Okay, I’m going to admit you’re not wrong on that front,” Technoblade admitted. “Locking them up would have been a more effective solution than just blocking off all exits to the mansion. But we would have had to know about this way beforehand for that to work, because it would have been easier to transport them while they were still normal. Trying that now, could again, be a suicide mission.”

He didn’t care that it was a possible suicide mission. Dream was a criminal, and Ranboo was a monster - putting them in prison would be more beneficial than allowing them free reign of Snowchester. He didn’t care what Techno said to try and dissuade him - he needed to go. Sam told Techno this, and the piglin gave off an annoyed snort.

“Fine. But I’m going to go with you, and once you realize that trying to move these things isn’t worth risking your lives, then we’ll come back here and you can say you imprisoned him again.”

“I’m not going to lie to everyone. I can just say that he temporarily is too far away to reach.”

“Not as effective at calming people, but it’ll work. Tommy, don’t worry, you can stay here instead of going if it makes you feel better.”

The blonde boy, still sniffling, nodded and sat down on a desk. He wiped his eyes, and Michael went over to him from Sam. The little piglin was surprisingly agile for a one-year-old, and he made it over to Tommy before Sam realized. He leaned down and looked at Michael as Techno went outside to prepare the horses.

“Take care of him for me, okay?” Sam whispered. Michael nodded and gently bapped Sam’s nose, which startled him. The creeper smiled under his gas mask and left the cabin, closing the door quietly behind him.

-+--

An hour later, the two arrived at the hill just before Snowchester. Sam had never seen it from this angle before. The gray walls towered high above the snowy expanse, but it seemed like there was something fundamentally wrong with the town. It looked dead from the outside. Even the mansion seemed cold and dark, where it should have been lit.

*Dream stole their lives when he used that stupid potion.* Sam’s anger bubbled beneath his surface, and the smoke from his mask thickened again. *He needs to be put to justice.* It made him uneasy to think that some of his friends were in there with this monster. Dream had escaped his clutches once, and he wasn’t letting it happen again.

"It seems so... dead," Sam said aloud.

"It is, unfortunately. Quite a shame, considering their military arsenal." Technoblade shivered a little. Sam had never seen him tremble - whatever lurked within those walls, it must be bad.

They progressed slowly toward the wall, so as to not accidentally provoke the monsters in the mansion. "Those guys somehow heard me eating a potato last week, and I think it might be because they've got enhanced hearing. Phil just says I'm a loud eater, but that doesn't explain hearing me through walls." The piglin rolled his eyes, then looked toward a tall spruce tree. Out of nowhere, he let out a loud, bone chilling screech.

They waited a few moments, and Techno repeated the noise. Sam saw the worry cross Techno's face. Something must be really off.

"PHILZA? ARE YOU UP THERE?" Technoblade shouted.

*Oh, he's looking for Phil*, Sam thought. Why he was yelling up a tree, Sam would probably never know. Maybe Phil was sitting up there.

"Oh god," Techno muttered. "Give me a minute, Sam. I've got two feelings, and one of them is that he fell asleep up there." Without warning, the piglin leaped from his horse and into the tree. He scaled it quickly, branches shaking as he climbed higher.

Time to get in there. Sam whipped the horse's reins, and he galloped toward the ghost town, his heart pounding. The horse's hooves kicked up swirling clouds of snow, which danced in beautiful spirals behind him. He pulled out a water bucket and stood up on his horse, which was galloping at full speed. Sam took a breath, and jumped up onto the wall, using the water to save himself.

Nothing about the town seemed out of place initially - houses were in order, streets were dusted with a light powder of snow - but as Sam kept looking, it slowly became clear to him what made this place a ghost town.

The houses were all dark, not a single candle or lantern left lit. Windowsills with potted plants on them were covered by snowflakes, the plants within them withered and dead. Ice fishing boats lay abandoned by the docks, lines of rope untouched and nets in a tangle from the wind. Outdoor stalls in a market were nearly broken down, clearly barely held together before now and in even worse condition.

The most unnerving thing was that there was no noise. Not a squeak of mice, not any feet patterning on the street, no voices talking and bartering. No children playing and shouting in snow drifts.

Just pure silence. It made him uneasy, to think that a place could be so devoid of life, when it had been made to accommodate it. Everything was simply dead quiet, and it hung overhead like an ominous shadow.

"Sam?" A familiar accented voice called his name from further along the wall, breaking the eerie silence. He turned and saw Philza striding toward him, wings slightly outstretched. His

figure was menacing from afar - a tall figure, confident pose, quick stride. A man covered in scraps of armor from hell, a sword by his hip, a war-torn wing spread open like those of an avenging angel. It was an awe-inspiring, yet fear-inducing sight.

“Hello, Philza,” Sam said. Calmly. He was tempted to hit Phil - after all, he had helped in the prison break - but knowing what was down in the mansion below, maybe that was not a good idea right now. He could easily become monster food if he wasn’t careful.

*Do you really believe them about the monsters? his thoughts said traitorously. They’re probably lying to you to keep Dream away from you. Don’t trust them unless you see one for yourself.*

They stood up on the wall, and Sam heard Techno climb the wall behind them. The three looked over the desolate town, empty homes releasing empty memories and empty stories, never to be told, never to be continued. It was shockingly sad, and it hit Sam quite hard. Harder than any emotion had ever hit him.

“Do you think it would be safe to go down there and take a look around for Dream?” Sam asked.

Philza and Techno swung their heads toward him, their eyes full of worry. “No, absolutely not, it will probably never be safe to go down there.” Phil’s voice was stern. “We banned Tommy because he tried to look for Tubbo on his first shift, and he set off the monsters.”

“That’s fair, but it’s still my job.”

“Sam, if you go looking for him, there is a chance that you could endanger the whole world. Are you really stupid enough-”

Sam didn’t stick around to hear the rest of it. He was off the walls before Phil finished his sentence. They called him, warned him, threatened him, but Sam would not return. He needed to find Dream and put him back in prison.

*I’m not believing this bullshit anymore.*

Sam strode confidently toward the mansion, and he could have sworn that he saw something move in the darkness of the window. It hadn’t been an animal, but it hadn’t been human either.

*You’re hallucinating. Open the door.* Sam kicked the door open, but only found obsidian in the way of the door. Its glassy, purplish black surface glimmered in the faint daylight filtering through the clouds above. He swore, but before he could pull out his pickaxe a horrifying screech sounded from the mansion. Sam froze, but he didn’t consciously do it. Fear had done it, not him.

“SAM!” Philza shouted. “WHATEVER YOU DO, DO NOT BREAK THE OBSIDIAN UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE.”

"Dream needs to be put to justice, Phil!" Sam shouted. The smoke from his mask was so thick he could barely see, and his anger bubbled inside him like boiling water.

"Sam, please, it's too dangerous!" Technoblade bellowed. "This is something we've worked so hard to keep away from everyone else, don't go undoing that now!"

"Do you not understand the term 'psychologically damaged?' What about 'child manipulator, or 'known terrorist?'" Sam was getting more angry. More set on breaking in. The unnerving sound came again, much louder, and it drew on for longer.

"Sam, do not open the obsidian! Dream put that there so that nobody inside could get out!" Phil cried. "If you release them, the likelihood of everyone here dying is much higher! Do you really want to be responsible for everyone's death?"

He didn't want to. Carrying the burden of letting Dream escape the first time was enough - it hurt, pulled him down, nearly broke his will. The only part of him he could rely on to protect him. He was doing this for everyone's safety.

*For the greater good.*

Before Sam could take a swing at the obsidian, a loud scratching noise stopped everyone in their tracks. It didn't just sound like scratching though.

It sounded like something was mercilessly attacking the obsidian, beating it, trying to break its way out. The cries grew louder, distressed, but angry and ready to hunt.

"The hell...?" Sam said aloud.

"SAM. BACK AWAY FROM THE DOOR."

"It's obsidian," Sam reasoned. "They don't have pickaxes. It'll take them ages to-"

Before another word was spoken, Sam was shoved sideways by someone he couldn't see, and he fell to the snowy ground as the door exploded.

There was no fire - it hadn't been an actual explosion, thankfully. Had that been the case, the entire mansion would have gone up in flames immediately. But Sam could feel the sharp, wooden wreckage of the wall poking through the spots in his armor. He tried to sit up, but yelled in pain - the obsidian had been destroyed as well, and there were shards of the dark glass all over him, stabbing into his legs and arms. He looked at one hand, only to see bloody shards embedded in his hands, dripping dark blood down his hand.

The monstrous cry came again, but this time, there were two huge differences.

One: There wasn't just one. There were multiple, calling in deeper and higher tones, but always the same, ear-shattering cry.

Two: They were much clearer than when the wall hadn't been destroyed.

*They're out, they're out, they've escaped, they're going to hurt people.* His thoughts sang with worry and fear. He'd never heard of something able to destroy obsidian without a pickaxe before.

A growl sounded from above him, and Sam turned his head skyward. He regretted it immediately as he froze in place.

There was a... *creature*, standing over him. It was skinny and withered, pale white skin barely stretched over visible bones. The flesh sank through the holes between the bones, and irregularly placed and shaped holes dotted its body. He could see muscles flexing, veins pumping, severed arteries dripping with greenish blood. The fingers were long, and draped down by his face from grossly elongated hands. Its body was even worse - the entire center of the torso was ripped clean out, a human-sized hole that even Sam could fit through if he tried. The organs were missing, and only remnants of them were left - a stomach ripped to shreds, torn pieces of lungs hanging uselessly from bronchial tubes. The heart was entirely gone - not a trace found anywhere. More irregular holes lined what remained of the torso, green muscles dripping with blood.

It had three legs, not a spider, but not a human. Holes were everywhere on this thing - seeing them made him want to throw up. It had a thin tail as well, flicking back and forth in an ominous manner. Sam looked even further up at the creature standing over him, and any thoughts he'd previously had about fighting this thing vanished like dandelion seeds in the wind.

Its face was round and smooth, broken only by its eyes and its mouth. The eyes were horrible, thin and upward pointed, with the pupils on in its face a bright red, glowing brighter than the daylight around them. They followed his every movement, and as Sam tried to move, it pinned him down with one leg and leaned in closer.

Its mouth was horrifying - there were massive, rounded teeth with sharp ends poking out from the gumline, having even torn them. Dark blood dripped from its mouth, forming stains around the mouth. But that wasn't even the worst part.

The worst part was that the mouth split the face nearly in half, with a big, psychotic grin. Its face looked like it had been stitched together. The stitches around the mouth were ripped, like the fragile plants that once rested here.

Something made Sam feel horrible about this thing. It had once been someone he knew, that was for sure. He couldn't figure out who it could have been - until he saw the remnants of a tattered, worn green cloak, resting serenely on its shoulders.

*Dangerous, smile, green - DREAM!* His thoughts screamed in panic, begging him to run or fight and trying to direct him in every direction while also telling him to stay put.

“SAM!” Techno shouted. “START FIGHTING BACK OR YOU'RE GOING TO DIE!”

The Dream creature hissed angrily, and shot green string from its grossly elongated fingers. The strings clasped around a piece of wood, picked it up, and threw it at Techno, who was fighting a weird, black and white zombie... was that *Ranboo*?

It turned its eyes back on him, their malevolent glow lighting up the obsidian in his arms and legs. He struggled, trying to draw his sword, or any weapons, but the thing redirected the strange strings and disarmed him entirely.

That unwelcome emotion of fear started to fill him, and the creature snarled and grabbed him. It screeched right in his face, an unpleasant experience - it pretty much spat blood all over him - and before Sam knew what was happening, thin green lines surrounded his face and everything went dark.

-+=-

Techno's sword flashed through the air as the disturbing figure of Ranboo approached him from the door. It let out another high pitched screech, its unhinged jaw drooping pitifully. So much pain filled Technoblade - he never would have thought that he would live to see the day that something like this would happen to his friend. Full honesty, he never would have thought these kinds of things could ever actually exist anyways.

He swung his ax halfheartedly to the side of the creature - it may have been trying to kill him, but it still looked like his friend. He couldn't bear to hurt him. It would hurt him too much to do that.

Truth be told, had Dream never come to him and told him about this, the situation could have ended up so much worse. They could have fought these things without even knowing who they used to be, and in Techno's opinion, that might have been better than knowing that the creatures he was fighting against were old allies.

The creature lunged toward him, faster than he would have thought possible for something with such extensive injuries. It screeched again, trying to claw at his arm, but its hand caught on his netherite armor instead. It snarled and yanked its hand back, the slitted pupils never straying from Techno's own. It seemed like the malformed Ranboo was staring deep into his soul, judging him for his most secret deeds and unspoken secrets.

It was an unnerving feeling, one that he didn't want to feel ever again. In the back of his mind, he was rather glad that they had chosen to leave Tommy back at the cabin - this was some scarring stuff. The kid would have probably had a meltdown on the spot if he'd seen this.

It lunged for him again, trying to bite him this time instead.

"Ranboo, Jesus Christ!" Techno shouted. "I get you're probably pissed off about being locked inside a house for two weeks, but I do not want to get your saliva in my bloodstream, thank you!"

The only response he received was an annoyed growling sound as the creature retreated. But then another sound caught his attention.

It was the same as the other sounds, but more high-pitched and it had a slight buzzing to it. He dodged around Ranboo again and looked over to where Phil had been when the door

exploded, and what he saw nearly froze him in place, and he would have fully done it if he wasn't still trying to not get bit by this stupid thing.

Another creature was approaching Philza, but it wasn't like the one that had attacked Sam or like Ranboo. This one was different, and it was continuously calling angrily at Philza. It wasn't attacking, but he had a feeling it wouldn't take very long for it to start.

Another scream caught his attention, but this one was not by one of the creatures. This was human, or nearly so, and it was filled with pain. Through the wreckage of the door, he could see that the pale, skinny creature was wrapping weird strings around Sam's face, growling and hissing as it did so.

*Save! Watch out for the thing! Help Sam! Keep an eye on Phil! Blood!* The voices cried. They were panicking more than usual when it came to a situation like this, and they were apparently very worried about Sam and Phil.

Phil was a good fighter, so he had a feeling that if his creature attacked he'd be fine to fight it off by himself. But Sam was disarmed and at one of the things mercy. Being on the ground with no armor was always bad, no matter who or what you were fighting.

"SAM! DON'T WORRY, I'M GONNA HELP YOU!" Techno shouted. The malformed Ranboo let out another call, its ear-piercing sound ending in a saddened groan. He nearly swore as it lunged in his way and grabbed at his axe, barely noticing the line of blood that started to drip from its hand.

-+--

Phil carefully backed away as a new creature approached him. He'd never seen it before, and in his ancient mind he wanted to know more about it, wanted to study it. But a part of him knew better than that. This was not something he should spend a lot of time in close proximity with.

It let out the same high-pitch call as the others, but it had a slight buzz to it. It didn't attack, didn't move a muscle and it glared at him. Phil took a closer look at it while trying his best to remain alert.

The creature was shorter than the others, but that made it no less unnerving. It seemingly had a humanoid body and a pair of human hands, but those were attached to its mid back. In the place where the arms should have been were a pair of large, mantis-like claws which it was flicking back and forth as though waiting for something.

Surprisingly, it had two pairs of bug-like wings on its back, attached between the upper and lower sets of arms. They flicked easily, as though this creature had had them its entire life, yet they still had evidence of leftover skin hanging from the clawed tips of the wings. It was torn and bloodied, and the wings still had drying blood on them, which shone through the transparent wings in the faint sunlight.

Its lower body had the tough, short legs of a goat, on split hoof in front of the other. Strangely, where a tail would have been, there was a large, fur-covered abdomen of what

seemed to be a wasp. The stinger on the end was sharply curved and serrated.

Phil finally took a good look at the creature's face. He didn't want to - he had a strong suspicion as to who this was, and if he was right then Tommy would be heartbroken. But he needed to.

His theory was correct. It was the same bushy, pale brown hair, the same small set of horns, the same pair of floppy ears. But there was so much different about his face.

The lower jaw opened and closed in two separate plates with two small, bone fangs protruding from the gum. The eerie grin split the face to the ears, and a pair of antennae sprouted from just in front of the horns. The eyes were horrible - sunken into the socket and smaller than they should be. The area surrounding the eye was dark, and Phil could barely see the inside of the socket. The pupils were rectangular and glowing yellow, watching Phil's every move like the eyes of a hawk would a rabbit.

Phil still didn't want to believe that this was Tommy's best friend. His adopted son, who he'd found on the side of a road. He would have refused to believe it if it weren't for one thing.

The creature wore Tubbo's jacket, the same one that was Snowchester's uniform jacket. It had patches of the flag, a missile, and on the underside of one arm, the L'Manburg flag, hand-stitched on.

It let out a curious hiss, and it took a step toward him. Phil could hear Technoblade shouting something not far away, but he couldn't tear his eyes from the deformed, changed Tubbo. Another curious sound escaped it. The wings buzzed slightly as it moved. The long claws reached up. There might have been a more sinister intent behind them, but it displayed none. Unlike the other two, who seemed outright hostile and ready to kill anything in their way, Tubbo seemed more curious.

Phil took a step back and his back hit a house wall. Cornered. Not good. The creature continued its approach, and it took every last bit of him not to pull out his sword and start attacking.

*Don't attack unless it does*, his mind sang. It stood upright, letting the stinger drag on the ground. It made one hell of a racket, letting out growls and hisses and clicks. Like it was trying to speak.

One word made it through that he could understand: "**Phil?**"

"Tubbo, I'm so sorry," he whispered. The creature flicked its ear and tilted its head. The same way he sometimes used to. "I should have tried harder to get you out of there. Now you could be just completely fucking gone! What am I supposed to tell Tommy?"

A snarl and a series of shrieks erupted from Phil's left. The creature looked over, as did he. And what he saw wasn't pretty.

Sam was out cold on the ground, his arms and legs bleeding from the obsidian sticking out of them. There were also odd, thin green strings obscuring his face, making him near

unrecognizable. Phil probably wouldn't have known it was him were it not for the armor and crown.

There was one creature standing over him, but it didn't seem friendly. A twisted, sadistic grin split its face, massive teeth facing outward. Its eyes were thin and slitted. It stood menacingly over Sam's limp body, and Phil realized the strings were attached to its long fingers.

Technoblade was running at it, ax dragging behind him, but hot on his tail was the deformed creature that had once been Phil's friend. It moved fast, faster than he'd ever seen anything move. Even with a swiftness potion, he wasn't sure a human could move as fast as it did.

"TECHNO, WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING?" Phil yelled. The bee-thing screeched in annoyance - it clearly didn't enjoy the loud noise. But Phil had to stop his friend. He could get killed.

"GET BACK HERE, YOU IDIOT!" The bee screeched again, but this time it was no longer facing Techno. Now it was facing him.

It let out another furious cry, and before Phil could react, it lunged for him, and they crashed into a market stand, which brought splintered wood crashing down on them both. The angry screeches of the creature rang loud in his ears, and sudden stabbing pains in his arms told him that the shattered wood pieces were stuck.

Phil forced his arm to move through the stabbing pain, drawing his sword and flinging wreckage off of himself. He readied himself to fight the monster...

But the monster was gone. So were the other two monsters.

Phil looked around, praying that Sam hadn't been taken. Even if there was mutual dislike, Phil cared if people were getting taken by these things.

Sam was nowhere in sight.

Before Philza could leap up and try looking for him, a strong hand helped him up. A small smile crossed Phil's face. Thank the gods that his old friend was alright.

"Did the things get you?" Technoblade asked.

"Nope, thank god," Phil replied. "The only thing that got me were the big fucking splinters that came from the stupid stand." And indeed, they had gotten him - the sharp sticks were still poking out of his clothes from his skin, and his hand was dripping red.

"Let's get back home then, we'll make sure *Oldza* doesn't die of blood loss," Techno said. His manner was joking, but in a halfhearted way.

"Oh, stop it, you." He elbowed the piglin, who laughed. Techno helped Phil over to the gate, and before they left, Techno blocked up the inside and outside of the gate with multiple layers of obsidian. Hopefully, that'll be enough to keep them inside, Phil's mind thought.

The mounted the horses and began the long trek home, as the murder of crows rose to the sky with mourning crys.

## Chapter End Notes

This is the second part of the chapter, and I promised a longer one, so I delivered. Keep in mind that this takes a while to write so updates might not be too frequent. I do hope you're all enjoying this though, it's very fun to write.

# Warnings

## Chapter Summary

Phil and Techno return from the harrowing and dangerous place that Snowchester has become, and Tommy has to deal with a few unexpected visitors...

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy heard as the horses trotted into camp, their hooves trampling through the snow drifts and landing on the hard ground beneath. Michael, who had been sitting up against a wall for the past little while, darted up excitedly.

"Tommy! Phil and Techno are back!" The young boy exclaimed excitedly. Tommy groaned slightly and stood up off of his own place on a paper-covered table. They'd been sitting there for hours, with Tommy telling the occasional story and Michael making up plenty of pretend games to at least try and keep them entertained, all the while Tommy's mind raced with all the worries and possibilities of what could be happening.

*Please tell me that they're all okay,* Tommy thought. The listlessness of his mind was blocked out by whatever grief he had that was ready to rise up and smother him again should someone be dead. *I don't care if someone tripped over a rock or got attacked. I just want them all to be safe. Snowchester is more cursed at this point than L'Manburg's ruins.*

He sighed, picked up Michael from his place at the window, and walked outside. He kept his eyes one the steps - they were a distraction from whatever horrible thing might have happened. Then he turned his attention to the snow below his feet, absently counting his steps.

"Tommy!" Technoblade's voice was loud. "Anything happen while we were gone?"

He didn't look up. "Nope, nothing happened," he said sharply. "It was all quiet here. What about you three? Did anything absolutely insane happen?"

Tommy continued to walk, his eyes passing over each snowflake, until he reached a point where he accidentally walked past his friends. It only took a few more steps for ice to freeze him in place.

Blood lingered in the snow where they had been walking. Merely the sight of it made him fear the worst.

"WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED?" Tommy shouted. Michael squirmed in annoyance, clearly not pleased with the loud sound. He whipped his head up to see Techno helping Philza

to the door, and there were holes in Phil's clothes. Blood dripped in rivers down his arms like ruthless, gleaming gems, landing sinisterly in the snow below without a sound.

"Let's get Phil patched up, then I'll explain," Techno called. The unease inside Tommy rose. Something else was off. Where was Sam?

"Tommy?" Michael whispered. He looked down and the piglin in his arms.

"What's up, buddy?" Tommy whispered back.

"What happened to Phil?" he asked softly. There was something in the little boy's voice, a shock that only a child knew that could scare them.

"Well, I'm not really sure what happened either. We'll have to go find out together."

Michael didn't say anything else, just looked on in fear at the trail of shining red left in the snow. Tommy sighed and followed it up into the house, where Techno had already started yanking splinters from Phil's arms.

"*OW.*" Phil snapped. "Techno, would you do me a fucking favor and not give me more splinters while your pulling wood out of my arms?"

"Sorry Phil. Some of them are pretty deep." The taller piglin pulled another large splinter from his friend's arm, resulting in another shout of annoyance.

"Are you going to tell me what happened?" Tommy demanded.

"Tell us, Techno!" Michael exclaimed. The childlike love of stories was evident, but by now, Michael was watching a horror story unfold.

"Michael, I just remembered that the crows need some feeding," Phil said with a wince. Tommy could see that he didn't like lying to the little boy either. "Could you go out and do that for me? I would but my arms are a tad wooden right now."

"Oh, classic, Phil," Techno said with an eye roll. "Making jokes when you're injured." Tommy put Michael down, and expected him to immediately go out to feed the crows like Phil had asked. Instead the young piglin snorted and climbed up onto a table, crossing his arms.

"I'm not gonna feed the birds! Every time you, Techno and Tommy have a conversation after going on those watches, you always tell me to go somewhere else!" Michael's anger was surprising. "I want to know what's happening!"

Tommy wasn't sure what to do. Michael was still way too young to hear about these kinds of things - they would scar him for life, and Tommy couldn't do that to a kid willingly.

But if they kept lying about it and he found out one day by himself, he would most likely be even more pissed off about it than he already was. Hell, he might even try to do something about it by himself, which could get him killed, which would get him in a hell's worth of trouble.

*You cannot tell him, his mind said quickly. If he learns that his parents died and you three did pretty much nothing to stop it, he'll hate you all forever.*

*Just lie for a little longer. Use the normal lie that adults use when they don't want to tell a kid something.*

"Michael, I know you're probably really annoyed about this," Tommy said carefully. "But it's really not for you right now. We'll tell you when you're older, okay?"

"But I wanna know now! I don't want to wait!" His shrill cries of protest pierced Tommy's heart.

"Listen to Tommy, Michael," Phil said sternly. "The stuff we're talking about is some pretty heavy shit, and you're not prepared to know the truth. Am I understood?"

Michael looked over at Phil sadly, then turned back to Tommy. "Promise you'll tell me?" he asked.

Tommy smiled a sad smile. "I promise I'll tell you. Now, go feed the crows like Phil said."

The little piglin hopped off of the table and put on his coat, slamming the door behind him as he went outside.

"He's pissed, but he'll be alright. Don't worry about him too much," Phil said quietly.

"Now, will you two tell me what the fuck happened and where the hell Sam went?" Tommy snapped. His own annoyances with Phil and Techno's reluctance to tell him what was happening was getting on his nerves.

"Give me a minute, will you?" Techno muttered. "Stickman over here needs to be not a stickman before I tell you, so if you're really so desperate to know you could help me."

"Oi!" Phil said. "I'm not a fucking stickman!" His tone was annoyed, but the cheerful grin that everyone saw all too often on him split across his face. Tommy felt a light laugh rise in his throat, but it still felt somewhat forced. Like if he laughed, something would go wrong.

"Oh, for fucks sake," Phil muttered. He was looking out the window, towards the silvery tree where the crows were. Tommy looked and dropped a string of curses.

There, standing out by the tree with Michael, was Jack Manifold. The man was talking politely with the little boy, who was showing him how to feed the crows in the midday snow.

"God, we really need a better way to keep people from getting in here," Techno noted.  
"Tommy, can you go grab him and tell him to get the hell off our property?"

"I can try." He felt quite annoyed, mainly because this meant he would have to wait even longer to learn about what happened. With a sigh, he zipped up his winter coat and slammed the door open.

Tommy thundered quickly down the steps, his boots thumping loudly on the wood. He looked over again and saw Jack holding Michael with an annoyed expression on his face.

“Tommy, would you please explain to me why in the hell this kid is so upset?” Jack snapped angrily.

“Really can’t talk right now, Jack,” Tommy replied, just as snappily. “Put Michael down, firstly.”

“I’d rather have an explanation before I give him to you.” The bitterness in his voice stung through the cold air, and Tommy felt his anger rising. Why could Jack never piss off when he needed to?

“I wouldn’t tell him something, so he got upset.” He kept his voice as calm as humanly possible while talking to Jack Manifold.

“I don’t think that’s a very good answer,” Jack said carefully.

Tommy let out a frustrated sigh. “You know, Jack, you have a habit of showing up at the most inconvenient of times, right?”

“The hell is that supposed to mean?” he snapped back. “I’d say the same of you, if it weren’t for the fact that you’re usually the cause of the inconveniences in the first place!”

“I do not cause inconveniences!” Tommy yelled. Michael squealed in fright and wriggled his way out of Jack’s arms. He darted over to the tree and climbed up a lot faster than Tommy would have expected him to, with the mass of black feathers and sharp beaks helping him up.

“Yes, actually, you do cause them!” Jack yelled back. “Every fucking time that something goes wrong on this server, its usually you who started some stupid skirmish or other shit that throws everyone’s lives out of balance!”

He stopped. Jack wasn’t wrong - so many of the little fights and even some of the wars had been his fault. The Railway Skirmish, L’Manburg, the discs...

And now, Tubbo being gone. Michael being an orphan. It was Tommy’s fault. He could feel tears forming as the thought of his friend rose to mind. He wiped them quickly - he didn’t want someone else seeing them - but to no avail. The water filled his eyes again, and he kept wiping them.

“Tommy, are you... alright? I know I just said you were a pretty big dickhead, but I didn’t think that would hurt you like that.”

“It’s not your fault, Jack.” Tommy annoyedly grabbed his arm and dragged him to the edge of the fence. His protests were loud and annoyed, but he ignored them and threw him out of the gate.

“What the hell, man?” Jack shouted. “Why are you throwing me out?”

Tommy dropped his voice, the strange fear that seemed to be continuously stewing inside him growing with no explanation. "Listen Jack, you won't believe me if I tell you, but you need to stay away from here. I'm being dead serious, you cannot be around here," he added as Jack opened his mouth to object. "Do me a favor, will you? Stay away from here, and especially stay away from Snowchester. It's not a safe place right now, and if you're extra nice, could you warn everyone to keep away as well?"

"But why should I?" he asked angrily. "Snowchester is one of the safest places on the SMP, and you're telling me to stay away from there? Dream is on the loose, and you're saying that going to what's basically a fortress is extremely dangerous?"

"JACK. I AM BEING SERIOUS." Tommy watched Jack's eyes widen as he spoke. "Snowchester is too dangerous to go to. Do not explore there, do not even think of going anywhere within a mile of that place. Please, don't try to explore it. Don't go near there, Jack, I'm begging you."

"Well, would you look at that?" Jack said with a small smirk. "The great, big man Tommy Innit is begging someone not to do something? How rare and awe-inspiring!"

A small noise - barely audible, but Tommy heard it. Snow had crunched somewhere in the woods. Beyond the fence.

"I'd rather eat slugs than give into your begging!" Jack snapped angrily. Without a word, Tommy put a finger to his lips and shoved past them. Drawing his ax, he peered into the forest beyond. Nothing seemed to be wrong, not that he could see. But that fear of the escape made him keep watching. Keep looking for something. Something he didn't want to face.

"Tommy, what the fuck is going on?" Jack's low whisper hissed in his ear.

"Will you shut up for two seconds while I listen?" Tommy snapped. But just as the words left his mouth, a weird rumble echoed from the forest. It didn't sound like anything he'd ever heard, but it certainly didn't sound good.

Jack froze, and Michael whimpered in fear. Tommy tried desperately to figure out where it was coming from - the noise was a drone, continuous, rising and dropping in pitch every few seconds. It was disorienting to hear, throwing him off balance and nearly making him trip over his own feet. Jack swore, stumbling around.

Tommy closed and opened his eyes, but for some reason, his vision was getting hazy. Weird orange and blue streaks danced across his vision like blowing leaves, wild and chaotic like he'd never experienced.

"JACK!" he shouted. "GET MICHAEL INSIDE, NOW!" He could barely see anything, but he heard Jack's unsteady feet crossing the snow behind him.

Tommy looked up, shaking his head to clear the weird effect. It didn't do much, but he managed to get a good grip on the ax. He glared through the blur of color in his eyes, into the forest. He knew that whatever was going to happen next, he needed to be ready.

Steadying his arm, Tommy took a battle stance and readied himself to fight.

## Chapter End Notes

Sorry this part took so long it takes a while to write all of this out. I do hope you're enjoying though!

Also, again, sorry about the shorter chapter, but sometimes you need filler between all the action. Next chapter will be longer!

# The Hunt Begins

## Chapter Summary

Philza and Jack rush to help Tommy from possibly certain doom, but it doesn't take long for things to go awry.

## Chapter Notes

**Trigger Warning for dissociation and uncomfortable sound description, if you're sensitive to this kind of thing then please read at your own risk**

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The door opened with a loud bang, spooking Phil and Techno. To their shock, Jack Manifold stood in their doorway, holding Michael in one arm and using the other to lean against the doorway. He looked like he was going to be sick, and his red and blue glasses were ajar on his face.

“What the-” Techno sputtered. “I thought Tommy led you off the property! What the heck are you doing here with the kid?” Michael jumped out of Jack’s arms and ran over to Phil, who carefully picked him up. The dull pain of the splinters was lessened by the potion of healing Techno had given him, but that didn’t mean that they weren’t sore as hell.

“Tommy was telling me to leave - rather aggressively, might I add,” Jack explained. “He was in this really weird panic state, telling me to warn everyone to stay away from Snowchester and not to explore there. He wouldn’t explain why, he just begged me not to go. Then he heard something in the woods, and then this really weird drone started up... it made us all feel pretty fucking sick. He told me to get Michael inside.”

Phil froze. A droning sound that made someone feel sick? Memories and assumptions flashed through his mind, and worry started to fill Phil like a waterfall. He whipped around to look at Techno.

“Techno, you don’t think...” The possibility was way too real after what had happened at the mansion only earlier that day.

“Jack, did he go outside the fence?” Techno immediately asked. The tension in the cabin was thickening by the second, suffocating any fresh air that Phil could have gotten from breathing. Holding his breath seemed to be better - like by praying enough, the threat might not be real.

"I didn't see him go out there, but I really can't be sure what happened after I came inside."

"Grandpa Phil, what's happening?" Michael cried. "I think it's really bad, and Tommy is out there by himself!"

Techno finally returned Phil's worried glance, and for a moment the old man could see his fear - reflecting and wandering behind the piglin's dark eyes like a twisted, corrupted dancer.

"Jack, grab any weapons you have and come with me," Phil instructed immediately. "Techno, I know you're a better fighter, but that's why you're protecting Michael. If anything happens, you're our backup."

"Phil, I can't let you go out there by yourself," his friend started. "What if you die? Or worse, get infected?"

The winged man turned to his best friend and put his hands on his shoulders. The desperation in the piglin's voice, not noticeable by any other, almost made Philza want to admit to him how unsure he was about this as well.

"Techno. I can handle myself perfectly fine. Besides, we have armor for a reason, don't we?"

"Phil, please. We can't lose you to this curse. We can't lose anyone else."

"I won't be long. I promise."

Before Technoblade could protest anymore, Phil grabbed Jack Manifold's shoulder and shoved them both out the door. It closed behind them with an ominous click. They put their armor on, the dark, shiny netherite glimmering in the sunlight. Phil drew the sword as the odd droning noise came to his ears, rising and falling like the gusts of wind.

"TOMMY!" Phil yelled. The boy wasn't fighting anything, but he was shaking like mad, his ax unsteady in his hands. He was staring out into the woods like he was half expecting Jack and

Phil ran over next to him, but a terrifying scream echoed through the woods.

It rattled the sky and pierced his ears, the sound sharp and cold like needles. He hadn't heard anything like that before, but it must have come from somewhere. From where, he didn't want to think about it. Jack covered his ears, but it was more than too late for their eardrums - as Phil reached up to cover his own, he felt a warm liquid running from them. Pulling one hand away, his thought was confirmed by a red, glossy smudge.

"Get to Tommy and make sure he's okay!" Phil yelled through the scream. "I'm going to take a closer look at the woods!"

Jack nodded, and he was surprised that he could even hear through the cacophony. It suddenly stopped, and the man ran over to the blond boy. Phil walked carefully over to the edge of the fence, his hand on the handle of the ax he carried.

Jack put a hand on Tommy's shoulder, and he could feel the boy shaking like mad. Admittedly, he was a little salty about the fact that nobody would tell him what the hell was going on, but from the way Phil and Techno had panicked earlier, he wasn't sure he wanted to know anymore.

"Tommy, you good bro?" he asked quietly. Tommy didn't say anything, just kept staring out into the woods. Jack shook him slightly, but still no response. It was like he'd been completely frozen in time.

"Tommy, stop being weird and just tell me you're not absent so I can tell Phil that you're okay!" His annoyance was growing with each word that slipped from his mouth. Why couldn't this stupid kid ever listen to people?

"Jack!" Philza called. "Is he okay?"

"How am I supposed to know when he won't fucking talk?" Jack snapped in return. "He hasn't said anything!"

"Keep trying to get him out of that stupid daze!" he called. "We can't have him like this if we need to fight!"

Fury flew through Jack. They still weren't telling him anything, and yet they expected him to help them fight whatever it was that had frozen a kid in place? Bullshit, that's what it was!

"That's it!" Jack snapped. "I'm not going to help you unless someone tells me what the fuck is going on! I'm not losing a life over something stupid that you wouldn't explain to me!"

He thought he had very fair reasoning in this situation. Nobody wanted to lose a canon life to something stupid - partly because when it was embarrassing, partly because it left you more vulnerable - and he also didn't want to get dragged into another of Tommy's stupid slip-ups.

"Jack, there is no time to explain right now, but I'll give you the short story if there's nothing in the woods," Philza said vaguely. Which did not help whatsoever.

Another eerie noise went through the clearing, this time low and rumbling. Jack felt something prodding in his mind, and for half a moment it felt like the time of the Eggpire all over again - the weird searching thing trying to invade his mind, trying to control him.

But this force was not invasive - if anything, it was just curious about him. It sifted through him, and it felt like it was trying to bury itself in his gut. A sick feeling overcame him and he nearly collapsed.

Suddenly, Tommy's head snapped to attention. Jack looked over at the boy as the low sound continued, slithering in his ears like worms. He started to whisper something, and tears started falling down his face.

"Tommy, what's going on?" Jack demanded desperately. He didn't want to be here anymore, with the unyielding tension and weird feeling of being invaded by something.

"The trees," Tommy said clearly. He started to move, and dragged Jack along with him.  
"PHIL! THEY'RE IN THE TREES! GET AWAY FROM THERE!"

Before Phil could move, and before Jack could get Tommy's arm off of him, something massive dropped from the trees and grabbed Phil with a massive, clawed hand as others emerged from the bushes. Phil yelled loudly, and the creature screamed in anger.

Jack shook his head, trying to clear the gut wrenching feeling. But what he saw was nothing short of the most terrifying thing he'd ever seen.

Four creatures, all of them torn up and bloody and just downright *wrong*. He watched on as his eyes passed on from thing to thing, their horrible screeching sounds ripping through him like a blade.

There were two human looking creatures, but neither of them seemed fully human anymore. One was tall and gaunt, its lankiness and bent over posture making its hands drag on the snow below them. The jaw was unhinged and dangling like rotten bait on a fish hook. Jagged spines emerged from its back, and its dark purple eyes glared up at Phil with a grudge. Jack could have sworn he knew who it was, but it was so mangled and destroyed that he wasn't sure anymore.

The other creature looked equally as wrong, with bug wings sprouting from its back and two sets of arms. One set wasn't even human arms anymore - just long, mantis-like claws. Its sunken, small eyes looked around the clearing curiously, while the taller creature snarled at it. They briefly landed on Jack, and for a moment he was left feeling like he was being... evaluated, in a way. Like it was sizing him up to a fight.

The other creature was shorter than the tall one, but not as short as the bug wing one. But it was filled to the brim with irregular holes, going in and out, exposing bone and letting muscle fall off and out of the thing. A massive hole was there in the center of its chest, ribs hanging low as if they were low-swung branches on a pine tree. A psychotic, toothy grin split its round, bald head nearly in half.

A terrible stench reached Jack's nose, the sweet yet sickly smell of rotten flesh filling the air. The angry screeches of the creatures entered the air around them, slicing through it like thin silver blades.

The creature holding Phil felt so familiar. It was massive, with four long, spider-like limbs, two stretched up on the tree behind it and two over the fence. Each leg ended in one large, sharp claw, the tip bending easily as it stuck to the ground. Just behind each claw was another, smaller leg, with the same claw on it. Its upper body was humanoid, but it seemed off. There were no holes in this creature, thankfully, but it had a shell of shiny, well-polished black armor covering its chest and arms like shells.

Its face was odd looking - like a creeper's almost, yet it seemed so much more mournful as the edges of the mouth dropped down. Its eyes were black, blacker than the obsidian of a Nether portal. They watched in hatred as it lifted Phil off his feet.

Jack scrambled to his feet, drawing his sword quickly. Tommy held the ax ready, clearly prepared to fight these things even if it meant getting hurt.

“PHIL!” Tommy screamed. “TRY GETTING AWAY! JACK AND I WILL-”

“NO, TOMMY!” Phil yelled back. “STAY AWAY AND KEEP YOURSELVES SAFE!”

Jack swore loudly, and Tommy simply screamed. He didn’t say anything, just yelled his anger out. The bug thing looked over at him, its tiny eyes gleaming with curiosity. It made a noise close to a buzz toward the tall creature, and as the pair watched, the tall thing growled back at it.

It buzzed, and started carefully making its way over to them. Tommy panicked and drew a blade, stopping the thing in its tracks. It made a sad sound, one that Jack never would have heard before, but kept moving forward.

“S-Stay back! Which one of them are you?” Tommy yelled. To Jack’s surprise, tears were rolling down his face. Did he *know* this thing?

The weird buzz echoed through Jack’s ears as it came within a few feet of them. It made no move to attack them, but he kept his ax ready. *It could become hostile at moment’s notice, like one of those stupid spiders*, Jack thought.

It buzzed again, and Tommy stumbled back. Gods knew what was going through the kid’s head.

Once more, it made the sound, but this time, they both clearly heard something. Something familiar, something that scared the living hell out of Jack.

“Tommy?” it whispered.

“Is that...” Jack said under his breath. *That’s TUBBO?*

“Tubbo, what happened to you?” Tommy wailed. “I thought you fucking died! I THOUGHT RANBOO KILLED YOU! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW CRAZY IT’S BEEN DRIVING ME THAT I DIDN’T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?”

It buzzed, the shimmering wings resting on its back flicking slightly in the bloodstained snow. Jack hadn’t even noticed that the blood from his ear was dripping onto the clear, cold crystal below.

“Tubbo, please, I know that there’s a way to fix this!” Tommy pleaded. “You can’t be stuck like this forever! I promise I’ll fix this!”

“Oh really?” Jack snapped. His shock had turned to anger, and the weird wrenching in his gut was not helping him out right now. “Just like how you probably got us into the mess in the first place? What the hell did you even do for this kind of thing to happen?”

His voice had risen to a shout, and he coughed as he finished speaking. Something was off.

“It wasn’t me, Jack I swear!” Tommy’s eyes were teary and begging. He’d never seen him so upset. “It was Dream, this was his fault!”

“BULLSHIT!” Jack shouted, and he doubled over to cough again. Beside him, Tubbo’s weird buzzing grew into an angry sound. “EVERY BAD THING THAT HAPPENS IS USUALLY BECAUSE YOU DID SOMETHING STUPID!”

Tommy froze as a high pitch screech came from Tubbo, and before Jack knew what was happening, Tubbo had lunged at him and clawed open his arm with one of the long claws. Jack screamed in pain, and the sick feeling overtook him.

Everything was a blur, he couldn’t hear anything, he could only feel the pain of the cut and the twisting in his body. It was no longer in his stomach alone, but spreading throughout his whole body, and he felt worms crawling through his skin, his bones, everything. It squeezed and moved and threatened to stop him from moving entirely, and he screamed long and loud.

Tommy cried out, but he didn’t rush to Jack. Instead, he ran toward where Philza was, his tears dropping silently on the snow below.

*Why did he leave, why did he leave me here by myself, I’ll kill that little bastard, doesn’t he know how much this hurts, doesn’t he know I need help?* Jack’s thoughts were a whirlwind, a hurricane of anger and pain tearing him apart from inside. It was too much, and he could barely keep his eyes on one thing as blood stained the ground from white to ruby red.

Then he felt it. A weird presence, just inside his mind, slowing the hurricane of thoughts. It collected them and brought them to one place. Jack couldn’t feel grateful to this thing - the squirming sensation was getting to be too much, the worms threatening to burst out of his skin.

But then it stopped helping. It started pulling him away, trying to kill him, conquer him, destroy him. Jack didn’t care anymore. The little shit had left him to die, and as he leaned into the presence, the pain started to fade away. Without any more thought, he flung himself into the blissful dark, letting the thing take his body.

*No more pain, no more hurt.*

*No more betrayal.*

## Chapter End Notes

I should have probably been adding more trigger warnings at the beginning of these, I will do that from now on.

Also really hope you guys like this, it sometimes genuinely gives me chills writing this.

# Stolen Away

## Chapter Summary

Techno and Tommy try to retrieve Phil from the monsters, but they lose two people instead of one.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Phil watched as Jack Manifold collapsed on the ground. The thing that had once been Tubbo had scampered back over toward the group of... well, *demons* really seemed to fit their appearances. Jack's blood dripped on the ground and covered the long claw, sinking into the snow as water on paper would.

Phil tried to escape the massive spidery thing's grip, but his attempts were fruitless. Its strength was much more than his own, and with every time he tried to escape its grip tightened, constricting him as a snake would. Phil took a closer look, and it barely took a second before he realized why this thing had grabbed him in particular.

It was Sam, but just like the others, it wasn't really him anymore. The long, messy and drooping hair was unlike him, the crown tilted to the side and almost off. His eyes were black, dripping with a weird, black liquid that looked somewhat like blood. His mouth dropped down at the sides, forming an eerie frown. There didn't seem to be anything inside his mouth, but gods knew what kind of teeth could be hidden inside.

The shiny dark shell covering his arms were fashioned very similarly to default netherite armor, and as Phil looked between his own armor and the creature's shells, he had a feeling he knew where Sam's armor had gone after he'd turned.

*Wait a minute, Phil realized. We left Snowchester only seven hours ago.... How is it possible that Sam turned already? I thought it took fifteen days! Is the infection spreading quicker, for some reason? Or does it just vary from person to person?*

Whatever the reason, he needed to get away from Sam. Getting away could be the difference between either getting killed or getting turned, or maybe even staying alive. The latter option was most preferable, but if shit went downhill, then he would rather die.

Getting turned was the worst way to go, it seemed. If the screams of pain that Ranboo had made when he was turning were any indication, then turning was some of the most painful shit he'd ever seen.

Phil forced his legs to kick at Sam's hand, but it was no use. It was too tight, and as it squeezed tighter around him, he felt the amount of air he was able to take in reduced. It was a

scary thing, knowing that you couldn't breathe as well, that you could be crushed to the point of suffocating. It was a feeling of having life squeezed out of you, forcing you to breathe shallower and shallower until you couldn't anymore.

He gasped for air, and the hole-infested Dream-spider screeched in annoyance toward Sam. The creature's grip lessened enough for Phil to be able to breathe, but not enough for him to reach his sword.

"PHIL! DON'T WORRY, I'LL HELP YOU!" Tommy cried. Amidst all Phil's panic about trying not to fucking die, he'd completely forgotten about how Tommy was still standing there, watching him be taken hostage by these things.

The door to Technoblade's cabin slammed open, and out came the piglin, netherite gear equipped and eyes a blood red from his rage. No one else could see it, but the humming buzz of the voices echoed around just outside Techno's head, eyes watching his every move and most likely screaming for blood. He thundered toward them, trident in hand and dragging ominously through the blood stained snow.

He barely looked at Jack's now limp body as the piglin stormed past Tommy.

"SPIDER THING, YOU PUT DOWN PHILZA RIGHT THIS DAMN SECOND," Technoblade shouted. He pointed the trident toward Sam, fish hook points aimed directly toward the creature's heart.

The creature screeched loudly, right in Phil's ears. He swore as he felt more blood trickling from his ears. At this rate, he would be deaf before Techno could get him out of this mess.

"YEAH, PUT PHIL DOWN!" Tommy cried. The boy waved his ax in the air wildly, trying to intimidate the band of creatures. They all screeched at him, and he immediately backed away from them, like a scared child. And really, in this situation, who wouldn't be?

"DID YOU NOT HEAR ME?" Techno bellowed. "PUT HIM THE FUCK DOWN."

*Oh, SHIT, Phil thought. He is certainly pissed if he's dropping F-bombs. I've never seen him this mad before either.*

Sam hissed, so similar to the hissing of a creeper that Phil felt a wild panic that something was about to blow up. But the hissing was different and wrong, low and penetrated by gargles as more black blood came out of Sam's mouth. Phil leaned away and held his wings closer to himself, the feeling of familiar feathers a comfort among the chaos of the situation.

The creature hissed angrily, then the hole-filled monster that Dream had become inched toward Techno. The piglin drew an ax, but the monster walked straight past him and over to the still bleeding Jack Manifold. It chittered, then picked up the man's limp body and swung it over its shoulder.

Phil watched it come back to the group, his stomach twisting as he locked gazes with the creature's slit-eyed stare. The toothy, wide smile seemed to become wider the longer Phil stared at it. Then Dream broke eye contact and crawled over next to the zombified ender

creature that had been Ranboo. It let out a weirdly triumphant call, and out of nowhere, Phil started to move into the trees.

“PHIL!” The twin cries of distress echoed through the clearing as the creatures sped away into the forest.

*No, no, no, he thought as he started to panic. I can't go out like this, and of course they can't help because now we're too far away to get any help.*

Phil let out one last desperate yell, but it wasn't in English. The crow call echoed through the forest, and he faintly heard the wings of his birds beginning to rise through the branches. The wind under their feathers quickly rose to a thunder, and before he could meet their eyes, he started to slip into unconsciousness.

His last thought before letting the dark of blissfulness claim him was; *I'll see you soon, dear.*

#### Chapter End Notes

Shorter chapter, but I swear the next one will be longer. I just really wanted to get this out.

# A Child's Innocence Shouldn't Be Tampered With

## Chapter Summary

The loss finally gets to be too much for the weakening group, but someone finds out things that they shouldn't have...

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Technoblade watched on in shock as the creatures disappeared into the forest, his trident still raised and aimed. Along with them, Jack Manifold was carried away on the shoulder of a hole-filled monster.

And Phil was gone too. Carried away by an angry, vengeful hand, most likely never to be seen again.

The voices were screaming and wailing, begging him to go after Phil, to save him from the clutches of the monsters. He could see in his mind the Greek letters spelling out the desperate pleas to help him. A few were even telling him to go save Jack.

Beside Techno, Tommy dropped into the snow. He couldn't see what Tommy was doing, but he was frozen enough in his own shock not to care. Techno's mind was reeling, and even the cries of the voices weren't enough to snap him out of his daze.

*He's gone, he's really gone, I can't save him.* The shattered thoughts repeated themselves through Techno's mind. *I should have been faster, I should have been better, I should have reacted quicker. No, I should have gone out here instead of Phil, then he wouldn't be in danger.*

A very loud sound pierced his ears. He finally looked over to the blonde boy in the blood stained snow beside him, who was kneeling low down and screaming into his hands. The sound was heartbreakng, and for the first time Techno genuinely felt sorry for what Tommy was probably going through.

Something ran down his own face, warm and wet, and as Techno wiped it away he realized that he was crying. Nobody except Phil had ever seen Technoblade cry before.

But now Phil was gone. And it was his fault. He could have saved Phil had he chosen to go instead. He could have done so much better in protecting his friend.

Another of Tommy's wails interrupted his whirling thoughts. Techno kneeled down next to the boy and put a hand on his shoulder. He could feel his own tears running down his face, but not a sound came from him.

The boy, on the other hand, cried out his pain, the wordless screams ripping through the air like sharp thorns and leaving jagged holes throughout.

Tears fell and froze as they hit the snow, mixing with the dark red crystals that were freezing into it. The screams sounded like sirens in the slowly darkening evening, and the two sat outside for hours, one in wordless silence, the other in grief-filled cries.

Eventually, Tommy stopped screaming. Techno barely noticed as they died down, his own quiet grief keeping him sealed away and barely responsive. The buzzing voices in his mind tried to console him, wake him from his daze, but nothing they said worked. Techno barely heard them. He couldn't even hear his own breathing. All he heard was a high pitched ringing, low and high, through his ears and his mind.

"Technoblade?" Tommy asked. His name being said out loud was nearly enough to snap him out of it, but it fell away quickly.

Tommy shook his shoulders hard and said his name again. This time, Techno did look up, meeting the concerned gaze of the teary-eyed boy next to him.

"Techno, are you alright?" Tommy asked. "You've got tears in your eyes."

"I'm fine," the piglin snapped suddenly. He wiped his eyes quickly with his sleeve, but he knew it was too late - Tommy had definitely seen him crying. But he didn't care right now. At the moment, all he could think about was how he'd watched his best friend slip away right in front of him.

*And you did pretty much nothing about it.*

"Uncle Techno?"

A thin voice carried through the still air. Techno and Tommy turned their heads to see a distraught looking Michael standing in the doorway of the cabin. His eye widened as it passed over the mess of red snow, the tracks from the creatures, and finally landed on Tommy and Techno. The little boy glared at them, tearing up, and ran back inside.

"Well, shit," Tommy muttered softly. "Now what do we do? We can't keep lying to him - he just saw this mess, he'll be way more insistent about knowing what's going on."

"Simple. We tell him."

Tommy turned to him, blue eyes still puffy from crying. "Are you mad? It'll crush him!"

"Tommy, he needs to know sooner or later. I think in this case, sooner would be better. He'd be better equipped to handle it when he gets older." Techno left the *if he gets older* unsaid.

The two stood and walked back toward the cabin, the sorrow lurking in the clearing around them a painful weight around them. Techno looked around the cabin, his eyes blankly wandering around, with nothing in particular catching his attention.

Then, from upstairs, the sounds of someone crying. It was high-pitch, but quiet. He could barely even hear it, even though the cabin was dead silent.

“Tommy, why don’t you handle this one?” Technoblade said absently. Something had finally caught his attention, and the voices were ramping up an idea in his mind.

“But... but, Techno, I don’t know the full story either,” Tommy whispered. “I don’t know who those two spider things were.”

“Simple. Dream was the shorter one, and somehow Sam’s transformation sped up like crazy.” Techno’s voice was cold and quiet. “Now you at least know who they were. Go tell him. He won’t listen to me if I tell him.”

*No, he definitely won’t. Not if he knows the stories. Not if he saw how much blood was really spilled over this.*

Tommy looked at him one last time, but Technoblade refused to meet his grief-stricken gaze again. It was already way too much for him to handle right now - seeing his own, hidden emotion plastered out across this kid’s face would crack the carefully crafted seal more than it already was broken.

Tommy climbed the ladder, the creak sounding loudly, and Techno turned to one of the desks, putting one hand over his eyes to wipe away the tears that still stained his face.

-+--

“Michael?” Tommy whispered. The upper floor of the cabin was quiet, but he knew Michael was up here somewhere. The floor was littered with stray pages, all of them covered in quickly scrawled notes. Tommy crouched down and took a closer look at one, and saw a rough sketch of the wretched potion bottle. He dropped the paper immediately, standing faster than anyone would were he not so unnerved.

*This must be where Techno was studying the potion.* The thought came briefly, and as Tommy spotted a brewing stand from the corner of his eye, he indeed saw that the glowing orange bottle was there, serenely settled into the holding clamp of the stand.

The rest of the room was filled with oddities and golden trinkets. On a huge chunk of carved emerald, sitting by one window, was a beautifully crafted golden bell. It wasn’t like any bell Tommy had ever seen - there were carvings he’d never seen before, and for some reason, a clock was one of the few he recognised. It was featured rather prominently, decorating the top, being the main pattern, semicircles lining the bottom of the bell.

*That’s a weird design to put on a fucking bell,* Tommy thought. Then he noticed a small sticky note attached to the emerald below where the bell rested. It read **God’s Bell**. That was definitely weird.

A small sniffle from behind the emerald reached Tommy’s ears. He looked around the corner of the block, and there sat Michael, head in between his knees and arms crossed.

“Michael,” Tommy whispered. The little Piglin looked up, eye watching him suspiciously.

“What do you want?” the little boy snapped.

“Bud, I just want to talk, okay?” Tommy sat down on the floor next to him, his shoes resting on the masses of scrawling notes. They sat quietly for a few minutes, listening to the cabin creaking.

“Well?” Michael whispered. “Why aren’t you talking? You said you wanted to talk.”

“Sorry, just not really sure how I should start.” The quiet settled over them again.

Suddenly Michael stood and stormed over to the piles of paper. He pulled two away and threw them down on the floor beside Tommy, glaring at him.

“These are what you didn’t want to tell me about, aren’t they?” Michael said. “I’m not stupid - I can read, and I’m not blind!”

“Nobody said you were blind, Michael,” Tommy said carefully. He looked over at the papers and froze.

They were sketches, with words beside them pointing to specific places on the sketches. Tommy barely had to see the drawings before he knew why Michael had pulled them out of the pile.

“I snooped through Techno’s stuff while they were gone and while you were outside doing who knows what,” Michael spat. “I read most of it - some words were tricky - but it doesn’t take a genius to figure out who they are.”

Tommy looked up at the boy, who was tearing up more with every word he spoke. “Papa and Dad didn’t really go to see Phil’s wife, did they? He wasn’t lying. They went to Crystinin.”

Tommy got to his knees and pulled Michael in for a hug. The piglin tried to resist, but gave in, shoulders shaking.

“Tell me he was lying. Please, Uncle Tommy.” He could hear the tears in Michael’s shaky voice, ready to fall from his eye.

Tommy couldn’t stop himself. He could feel his own tears flooding his eyes, the torrent of grief starting to swallow him up again. It was like a gray, whirling fog, soft enough to get lost in, yet so sharp around the edges that it hurt to stay. Memories of good times with Tubbo and Ranboo, messing around with Dream and Sam in the early days.

Tears fell to the floor as they both stayed quiet.

Then a gentle, sorrowful whisper.

“I’m so sorry, Michael.”

## Chapter End Notes

I write this to angst dump but also this genuinely makes me cry writing it. I know i promised a longer chapter, but i swear its coming.

# Belief That They Lie, When They Speak Truth

## Chapter Summary

Techno, grief-stricken and knowing he needs help, summons other members of the SMP to warn them collectively about the monsters. But not everyone believes his words.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Days passed. No sign of the creatures were detected in those days, but that didn't stop Technoblade from checking every corner of the fence pretty much every ten seconds. He knew what he was doing was unhealthy and definitely not helping their case or protection, but he couldn't stop himself.

He wanted to find something to indicate that the monsters were close, even if they shouldn't be anywhere near them. He just wanted to find a clue that his friend was okay.

Techno just wanted Phil back.

The voices were getting a tad annoyed with both the repetitive fence checking and his plan. They snapped at him incessantly, yelling for him to do something else.

"Oh, quiet, all of you," he snapped. "Just let me do what I need to do." They protested angrily, and a few of them suggested he get some therapy.

"Rude. I do not need therapy, I'm fucking fine." Their surprise was evident about his swearing, but he ignored it. His clouded mind was making him snappy, and Techno knew it, but he didn't feel like trying to clear his head. There was no point.

"Techno! Are you there or did you just completely space out?" A new, unfamiliar voice sounded next to him, and for a moment he barely registered that someone was actually talking to him. Then he looked over his shoulder to see who was actually talking to him, and felt a grim surprise settle over him when their familiar brown hair came into view.

"Ah, Wilbur." His voice was colder than usual, and he could see that Wilbur knew it. The young man avoided looking directly into Technoblade's eyes, but he simply pulled out a cigarette and lit it. They stood by the fence for a few minutes, before Wilbur spoke up again.

"So, Technoblade, why did you call everyone here?" Wilbur asked. His accent was gentle, his way of speaking silk smooth. So smooth that one would believe anything he said if he spoke it well enough.

Before Techno could answer Wilbur's question, the sound of a dozen hoofbeats reached his ears. He whipped around, checking the fence for any danger, but felt a small pang of relief when he saw the dozens of other people who he had called here.

While Tommy had been upstairs consoling Michael a few days past, Techno had been putting into motion a plan to help him save Philza. Not only that, but maybe even figure out how to reverse the potions effects. But he would need help.

The people riding the band of horses were almost all familiar faces. He could see people from the Pogtopia era, people from his execution, people that he'd barely interacted with and people that he'd never seen before. But they were all there.

Puffy reached them first, followed by Foolish and Fundy. After them, Quackity, and a slime creature followed behind, and for half a second Techno wondered if Quackity had already encountered the creatures. But judging by the look of confusion on his face, he didn't have the slightest clue what was happening.

Slowly, more and more people trickled in, and Techno led them to the most open part of the clearing. It was odd, having so many enemies and so many friends around. The voices had seen so many people, and many of them were bursting with opinions. For the moment, he blocked them out, ignoring the opinions as to not pre-cloud his judgment.

"Techno, why have you called us all here?" Eret spoke up from the back of the crowd. "Some of us have issues of our own to deal with."

"I know you guys have issues that you think are more important than this," Technoblade said. "But I say to you all, the problem I called you here today for is actually a much bigger fucking problem than you think."

"LANGUAGE!" Badboyhalo shouted from the back of the crowd. Techno turned a stony glare to him, and Skeppy immediately moved Bad's head away and out of view. He could sense the surprise emanating from the crowd as he swore, but he couldn't let himself get distracted by their shock.

*This is serious. You can't afford to even think about it. You need their help.*

"You all know that Dream escaped prison. I know that it's weird of me to be calling a server-wide meeting about this, because I was the one who actually broke him out, but I see why I shouldn't have." Techno's voice was cold as the words left his mouth. "Letting him out was one of the biggest mistakes I ever could have made. Not just because he was planning on terrorizing everyone, which he confirmed to me, but because he got a hold of something that essentially screwed us all over."

"So, have you called us here to apologize?" Quackity snapped from the front. The long scar running up the left side of his face was an ugly reminder of the pickaxe Techno had put through his head. "Because, sorry buddy, you can't really just say sorry and be done with it."

"He wasn't fucking finished, Big Q." Tommy's voice echoed from behind Techno, and everyone looked at him in surprise. He hadn't even been visible before now.

"Please let me finish what I was saying, Quackity." Technoblade didn't ask for many things, but right now he needed to get them to listen.

"You all know that Dream was a twisted man," Technoblade continued. "He would lie and cheat and hurt people to get his way. About a month back, he came to my door, begging to be let in and scared beyond what I'd ever seen. I let him in, and he explained that during his attempts to regain supplies for his plans, he came across something that shouldn't have existed. Not only that, but he used this thing on one of us. His explanation didn't make much sense, but he was begging for me to help him, so I did."

Eret calmly raised their hand. Techno looked down at them. "Yes, Eret?"

"You're leaving out certain details," Eret noted. "You never mentioned what this thing was, nor do you seem to be giving any indication that you want to. Another thing - you're talking about Dream in the past tense. He's still out there, lurking and probably waiting to hurt someone." Whispers of agreement went through the gathered crowd.

"Techno used past tense because Dream is dead." Tommy spoke up, his voice as cold as Techno's. Michael nestled himself in Tommy's arms. "Or at least, he should be dead."

Silence settled over everyone. Techno scanned his audience looking for some clue that they knew something was wrong. He saw that Foolish was comforting Puffy, although he couldn't be sure as to why. Sapnap, Bad, and George all looked at each other in dismay. The wind carried whispers of rumors and unspoken emotion, whirling through the small clearing.

"I don't believe this." Wilbur spoke up, smoke emitting from his mouth. He waved the cigarette toward Techno. "You and Dream are buddies - you could have easily just pressured Tommy into saying that so that Dream could get away." Wilbur looked around before adding something that chilled Techno to the bone.

"And where's Phil? If the matter was as serious as you make it to be, he would be here as well. That, and you apparently forgot to invite Michael's parents, who have some issues with Dream, or Sam, the literal head of the prison, looking for him."

Michael whimpered and hugged Tommy tighter, while Tommy simply sniffling and looked away. Techno gripped the hilt of his sword. He couldn't let himself fall apart, not now, not in front of so many people. Techno nodded to Tommy and the two young boys went back inside. They didn't need to hear this again.

"The thing that Dream found was initially used on Ranboo." Not a soul moved as Techno spoke. "It was why Dream came to me in the first place - what he did to him was not something he could fix by himself. And by doing that, he inadvertently got four more people affected by it.

"I'm sorry to be the one to share this news, but what Dream did pretty much killed Ranboo. Then Tubbo, Tommy, and Phil got involved, and Tubbo went to Snowchester to see Ranboo. By doing that, Tubbo also died. Dream stayed in Snowchester, but a surprise visit from Sam ended up letting them out and he got killed as well."

"Only a few days ago, they came to this cabin. Jack Manifold was visiting, but he was taken and is presumably dead now as well. But they didn't just take away Jack. They took Phil as well, but at this point in time we aren't sure if he's alive or not."

The silence that rested over everyone was heavy, too heavy for anyone to cut through.

"So what you're saying is that five people *died* in the past month and *nobody else knew?*" Sapnap shouted. "Why are you even making it such a big deal? They have their lives, they should be completely fine!"

"THEY DIDN'T JUST DIE, SAPNAP!" Technoblade shouted. Before the voices could reason with him, he threw the pages upon pages of research he'd had in his cloak over the crowd. People picked them out of the air, and began to look them over.

"THEY WERE CHANGED BEYOND RECOGNITION, AND IF YOU SAW ONE RIGHT NOW YOU MIGHT NOT EVEN HAVE KNOWN IT WAS THEM UNLESS YOU KNEW WHAT HAPPENED." Technoblade's angry yells sounded over the clearing. People looked on in abject horror as they scanned the pages, passing them from person to person, moving through the crowd and crying out.

He saw Eret come across a sketch of Tubbo and begin weeping. He saw Puffy wailing her grief to the skies as Foolish held her shoulder, looking on in shock at the pages in his golden hand. He even saw Niki begin to cry as Bad showed her what was presumably a drawing of Ranboo.

Quackity thundered up to him, with Karl and Sapnap following behind him, tugging his sleeve trying to stop him. The vaguely human-looking slime followed behind, eyes dim with confusion.

"YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD US ABOUT THIS SOONER!" Quackity screamed. "HOW LONG WERE YOU PLANNING TO KEEP THIS A SECRET?"

"We initially had the situation under control!" Technoblade said as calmly as he could, which wasn't very calm at all. The voices pointed it out, but he ignored their comments. "We evacuated the place where we were keeping them, we kept them under a constant watch, and had Sam not come along and accused us of lying and breaking the only thing keeping them contained, the situation would still be under control!"

"YOU DON'T GET IT, DO YOU TECHNO?" Quackity yelled. Everyone in the crowd had paused to watch them, bitterness and eagerness for a fight shining in their eyes.

"You don't get it, Techno," Quackity repeated. His working eye was dark and full of dread. "Every single time anyone on this server tries to control something major, it all goes to shit. You should have known better than to even unleash these kinds of things upon the land, you dirty hogsu—"

"THAT'S ENOUGH!"

The new voice thundered through the crowd, and a woman stormed up to the front of the crowd. Her face was covered by a veil, so Techno couldn't tell who she was. But a sneaking suspicion as to who kept wriggling around in his mind like an incessant itch.

The woman grabbed Quackity's arm roughly and held it up, shaking it furiously.

"How dare you insult him like this?" she snapped, her voice layered faintly with those lower and higher than her own, rising and falling in a furiously graceful symphony. "Do you know who he is?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact, I do," Quackity growled, trying to twist his arm out of her grip. "Technoblade, the guy who can't take the goddamn hint that he needs to die at some point. The guy who gives no shits, unless it comes to something that he made or busting people out of prison or blowing up a fucking country!"

"Quackity, dude, stop," Sapnap said in the most reasonable voice possible. Techno could see that he was mad about this woman literally just grabbing his arm, but it wasn't like he could actually do much about it.

"I will not!" the scarred man snapped angrily. "Techno is so obviously faking this whole thing, just for the fun of it. It seems like something you would do for clout, doesn't it?"

He stepped closer, leering at Techno with a self-satisfied smirk on his face. "I bet all the people you mentioned are inside, watching this whole thing go down and busting a few laughs. Tommy is probably laughing with them, for all we know."

The woman holding Quackity's arm let go, and Tommy came down the stairs behind him. Even Wilbur had stormed up to them, a spark of malevolence in his red eyes.

"Ranboo, Dream, Tubbo, Sam, Jack, Phil - they're all just hiding somewhere, playing a huge prank on us and Technoblade is here trying to convince us that they turned into some form of ungodly monsters." Sapnap and Karl grabbed both of Quackity's shoulders and tried to pull him away from the group, but their efforts were fruitless.

The voices were angry, bordering on a full-on murderous rampage. Techno didn't even need their help getting angry over this - this guy was straight up slandering the names of people who he cared about, who were dead.

Okay, so maybe 'cared about' was a little exaggerated. He barely knew Jack, and himself and Sam were never on good terms anyways.

But that wouldn't stop him from being furious over this.

Quackity was still talking, but the flurry of anger that was overcoming him made the shorter man nearly impossible to hear. The voices were enraged and wailing for blood, desperate to get their hands on him. Even with Techno's astounding amount of self-restraint, he couldn't hold them back forever. In the glittering afternoon, he probably wouldn't be able to keep himself back either.

A movement from the corner of his eye startled everyone out of their trances. Before anyone could stop her, the mysterious woman threw a strong left hook, hitting Quackity square in the scarred side of his face. She pulled her fist back, shaking it out a little bit.

His own anger was starting to bubble up, a hot, boiling feeling beneath his skin like molten lava inside a volcano. Sapnap shouted something at her, and she returned the words in a mocking tone. Techno couldn't distinguish them anymore. His vision was turning red, and the urge to hit something was overpowering.

With a yell, more people surrounded the group, and even Tommy returned outside to see the commotion. Sapnap and the woman were fighting, throwing punches and dodging out of the way, the tension between them thick and strong as iron.

Then Karl came in behind and hit the woman with a book. She yelped, and before Techno could do anything, he saw Wilbur and Tommy run in to attack him. His own legs moved as well, and he went after Quackity, standing with hand outstretched toward Sapnap.

Before he even knew what was happening anymore, his vision turned completely red and he was lost in the fight.

#### Chapter End Notes

Apologies for getting this out so slowly, I've been trying to keep up with twelve other things and this was second on my priority list, so I again apologize for my lateness.

# Dark Rooms

## Chapter Summary

Phil finds that he is somewhere unholy.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Phil's vision was blurry, to the point where seeing was really just an unreasonable thing to try to do right now. His head felt fuzzy, but the kind where it was sharp pains all throughout his skull.

He had no clue how long he'd been asleep for. He was certainly less full of wood than whenever he had been taken, and when he looked through the tattered holes of his robes, the wounds were scabbed over and healing.

Phil looked around him, and a slow, creeping terror started crawling up his spine.

He was in a dark, barely recognizable room. The floors were made of spruce wood, with only a singular soul lantern lit up next to him. Other than that, the rest of the room was completely black.

He tried to move, only to discover that he actually could move around freely. There were no ropes or chains around his wrists or legs, and his wings were free to stretch to whatever width he could. It was an odd thing, but then again, he wasn't sure that the creatures even knew how to use rope or chain. He stood carefully, as to make sure that he wouldn't rip open any of the wounds.

Trying to stand didn't yield very non-painful results. Within seconds of getting to his feet, Phil tried to walk - and fell over instead, banging his head on the ground.

"OW." he snapped. It echoed around the dark room, and a strange hiss emerged from one corner. Phil looked into the dark, trying not to let the terror in his bones resonate within him.

"Who's there?" he demanded. The hissing stopped...

And didn't start up again. Phil waited a good five minutes before feeling like he might be somewhat safe from whatever was in the dark.

Unbeknownst to Phil, people were organizing to come and find him.

To save him from the monsters.

But they couldn't save Phil from what lurked in the shadows of the dark room.

## Chapter End Notes

This one is just a little extra chapter to prep for next chapter, interpret this as you will.

# Apologies

## Chapter Summary

Wilbur and Niki catch up, while Tommy meets a newcomer to the SMP. But after Niki and the newcomer depart, it's just Tommy and Wilbur.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Wilbur paced anxiously around the camp where Techno had set everyone in the server up, gingerly rubbing his left shoulder. It still stung from the fight earlier that week, but it wasn't nothing that Puffy couldn't help him with.

Before the camps had been set up, before everyone had started to prepare for yet another battle, Wilbur, Tommy, Techno and the woman had gotten into a huge fight with Quackity, Sapnap and Karl. It had been an ugly fight, and before anyone had been able to break it up there had been quite a few serious injuries. Tommy had a broken arm and a broken nose from Quackity, Wilbur had gotten a dislocated shoulder due to a blow from Sapnap, and Technoblade had gotten two broken ribs from Karl. The woman hadn't taken a single hit, surprisingly, but her blows were some of the most damaging. Quackity, Sapnap, and Karl had more injuries than the three of them combined.

Oddly enough, the woman had disappeared before anyone could even see if she was injured.

He rubbed his sore shoulder in annoyance as he walked toward the medical tent. The sharp little pings ripped through his shoulder, and he tentatively removed his bruised hand.

Even though the camp was pretty much set up in Techno's yard, people were able to make room and surprisingly, did not disagree over where they placed their tents. Wilbur had a feeling that in any other circumstance, they would have.

He was still shaken by Techno's revelations of the monstrosity lurking just beyond the protective fences. People he knew, who he'd fought with and against, all gone with a drop of the glimmering orange potion. It was a terrifying discovery.

But it didn't just scare Wilbur.

He walked over to a bench and sat himself down, jolting his shoulder but ignoring the stings. He let his mind begin to stew in that all-familiar feeling of anger. Of grief. Of missing something that you couldn't get back anymore.

He was so mad. Wilbur had watched from the crowd that day, hatred and grief swamping him as Technoblade announced the list of people who were turned or missing. It may have only

been six people, but he had some connection with all of them.

And then the worst announcement of all. That Phil was missing.

Wilbur had been more than ready to go up there and beat the shit out of Techno, no matter how likely it was that he was going to get absolutely obliterated. But then Quackity had started his insults, and the target of Wilbur's hostility had quickly locked onto him.

He shivered, trying not to stew in the anger too much. It was a bad idea to get lost in those sharp, yet foggy places of uncertainty. L'Manburg had certainly taught him that.

But it was so difficult not to. He'd been revived, he'd learned his lessons after what had happened at Wilburger, he'd been talking to Phil about apologizing to people, he'd been improving - and now that chance felt as slim as it did the day the wars had begun.

He rested his face in his hands, trying not to let tears run out of his eyes. He didn't care how much it stung him to move his shoulder. He didn't care anymore.

He just wanted things to go back to normal.

"Wil? Are you... doing alright?" A soft, gentle, familiar voice sounded from beside him. He didn't look up as they sat down next to him.

"I'm fine, Niki." He'd barely noticed the pink-haired girl approaching him as he'd lamented in his own head. That was something he'd always been grilled about, self-awareness.

"I don't think you're very fine, Wil. You're sitting on a bench by yourself, head in your hands, with an injured shoulder."

She was right. He wasn't feeling fine. Niki had a weird sixth sense when it came to reading the people around her.

"No, you're right, I'm not fine." Wilbur lifted his head and let it fall back until it was tilted at that weird angle where he could see the sky, but his neck was stretched a little too far back. "My shoulder's been bugging me for a bit. Puffy probably wouldn't be very pleased to find that I'm moving my arm so much without her medical approval."

A small giggle from Niki told him that his sarcasm had been taken well. Before he knew, though, she'd resettled back into her therapist mode.

"I don't mean your shoulder, Wil. You know I didn't mean that."

He stiffened. Why were people like this? Always bringing up topics that others were sensitive to?

"Wilbur. You've changed since your revival. Everyone knows it. Even if we barely speak anymore, I can tell. This is only making you feel worse. It's making everyone jumpy and nervous that the trees are full of danger. You're not alone."

"You don't understand, Niki." Wilbur let his voice lash out a little. "Those were people who I had connections with." He paused. "Alright, maybe not so much Sam and Jack, but the others are people who I cared about."

"And I know that." Niki kept her own voice firm. "Jack was one of my best friends on the server. And now he's gone."

"They were people I was trying to fix things with!" Wilbur yelled suddenly. Niki flinched, and scooted away slightly. "I was talking to people, I was working up to admitting that I was an asshole! And now they're pretty much dead, and my father is fucking missing, Niki!"

"Listen to me, Wilbur Soot!" Niki snapped back in a sudden rage. She forcefully grabbed his shoulders, and it took most of his concentration to focus on her angry eyes and not the vicious stings.

"Phil was my friend too. Ranboo was my friend. Tubbo, Jack, and Sam - all of them, friends. Even Dream was an acquaintance at one point, before all this shit went down. And now they're all monsters. We have to keep our shit together, or they'll take more of us! Do you understand what I'm saying to you? Or are you just going to ignore me again, go back on my advice like you always do?"

"I understand what you're saying, but that doesn't make it less difficult!" Wilbur tried to shove her off him, but her grip was shockingly strong for someone of her height, and it only resulted in more angry stings from his shoulder.

He looked dead into her eyes, and realized there was something there that he'd never seen over his years of being around her - an untapped rage, once carefully sealed away by the barrier that was her usual happy demeanor. But something had happened that had destroyed that barrier, and the rage could now spill forth in a river at a moment's notice.

Wilbur didn't know what had changed after his death that could have done it. And again, that awful feeling of guilt settled in his stomach like a rock.

*Better just add that one to the pile of guilt in there.* His thoughts were annoying, but he let them slip away without acting on them. Impulsiveness was what got him into trouble.

"Niki, look, I understand that you're mad that I never listened, and I am..." he struggled for a moment. "Sorry about that. But I wasn't in a good state of mind. No one was. I think that whatever happened to you was my fault."

Surprise filled the pink-haired woman's eyes, but it was quickly hidden away again.

"It was a little bit your fault." Her blatant admittance wasn't something his ego wanted to hear, but he took the blow anyway. "But it was a little bit everyone's fault. This situation, right here, right now, isn't your fault, and the one who should be at blame is turned anyway, so he certainly got the punishment he deserved."

She let go of his shoulders, much to his relief, and continued. "But we need to figure out a way to reverse this as soon as possible, before more of us are taken. We need to be strong for

those who have been turned, be their hope for return, even if they don't know it."

Niki turned away, looking distantly toward the group of kids. Tommy was there, entertaining them, and they played a game of tag and ran around laughing. Wilbur watched them sadly, wishing he could go over there and join them without burden.

Niki spoke again, slower and quieter this time. "But we also need to stay strong for those who can't understand what's happening. For those who know, but are too young to do anything." Almost in a whisper, she added, "For those who have gone through enough torture and heartbreak and pain already."

As Niki spoke the last sentence, Wilbur's eyes locked onto Tommy. The blonde boy was cheerful and keeping a game face on for the kids, but Wilbur knew better. Over his few days in this encampment he was certain he wasn't the only one who could hear Tommy sniffling and holding back tears in his tent as he walked past at night. He wasn't sure if others had heard his quiet screams into his pillow as nightmares ripped through his fragile mind while the stars were out.

Wilbur admitted to himself that he hadn't moved his tent closer to the camp center in case things got dicey. He'd moved closer after the first night of hearing the boy who he thought was a little brother cry to himself, alone in the dark. To comfort him, even if Tommy might never trust him again. "Wilbur, you've zoned out." Niki's polite reminder brought his drifting thoughts back down to the earth.

"My apologies, Niki." Wilbur rubbed his shoulder again, even if it did him no good. "It's still hard to keep myself grounded, after all this time."

"I can see that, old friend." Niki stood from her seat and looked down at him. "You'd better go check with Puffy that I didn't jostle you too much. If I did, she'll have my head before the next sunrise comes up."

Wilbur laughed, an uncommon sound to hear, even to himself. Niki smiled faintly, and before Wilbur could thank her for the pep talk, she was gone in the blink of an eye. Her sudden vanishing left him feeling lonely, but pride filled him like a swelling balloon.

He'd done it. He had apologized to someone he'd hurt in the past. He was making up for his actions.

He was finally improving. And that was all he wanted right now.

But there were other people he still needed to talk to.

-+=-

"You're it!" Shroud shouted. Tommy laughed as he started chasing the young kids around, their joyful cries filling his ears. The chilly morning had everyone wearing coats, but that didn't dampen anyone's enthusiasm. It hadn't stopped the kids from kicking up snow into pretty, sparkling clouds, or forcing Tommy into a snowball fight.

*Well, boundless enthusiasm is better than complaining, I suppose,* Tommy thought.

He knew that most of these kids had no idea why they were here, but instead that they finally got to see the glimmery powder called snow. Every time one of them looked at it in awe, Tommy couldn't help but laugh. The children's fascination was hilarious.

Tommy darted over and tapped Fundy's son, Yogurt, on the shoulder. "Tag!" he shouted, riling up the kids' excitement ever higher.

The little snow fox yelped and darted away, running toward everyone else, and the game of chase began again. Tommy scooted off to the side, where he noticed Wilbur sitting on a bench, watching the crowd of tents with a pleased expression. Despite every fiasco, Tommy was a little happy to have someone here who he knew well.

Even if that someone nearly killed you multiple times and makes you feel like shit whenever you're around him, his thoughts whispered traitorously.

Tommy shrugged to himself and shoved the thought away. He didn't want to think like that right now. He was far too energized, far too excited to think about those things.

"Tag! You're it, Mr. Tommy!" shouted Puffy's kid - Michelle, if he remembered correctly. He stood up straight and tall and started chasing the kids again.

There were around six kids in total, all of them younger than him. Obviously there was Michael, Yogurt, and Shroud, but there were three others. Puffy's daughter, Michelle, and Foolish's kids, Foolish Junior and Finley. Michelle was another zombie piglin, while the two others were totems like their father.

Tommy didn't really care what they were, but he did care that they stayed safe.

Surprisingly, so much so that when he heard footsteps approaching from behind him, he nearly whipped out his ax in a panic.

"Easy, easy!" they yelped. "I'm not gonna hurt you, calm down!" Tommy calmed himself, and an awkward feeling settled over him as he realized the children had stopped their play to watch.

"Don't worry, guys, you can keep playing without me." The kids shrugged and continued their game of Tag, while Tommy returned his attention to the newcomer. And then he realized that they really were a newcomer.

This was one of the newest people here, Aimsey if he remembered correctly. Both people looked at each other for a minute or two before Aimsey finally spoke up.

"You're Tommy, right?" he asked carefully. "The chaotic one?"

"Sure, but we're all pretty chaotic on this server." Tommy held out his hand to shake, and Aimsey returned the gesture. Tommy took a good look at the person opposite him.

He wore a heavy winter coat, which was reasonable considering the temperature. There was nothing too remarkable about them, and the only other things he really noticed about Aimsey were the bunny ear hat and the coat pockets, which were open and filled with little trinkets, cogs, screws, and a variety of other things.

“I suppose it’s nice to finally meet you,” Aimsey said politely.

“Yeah.” Tommy’s voice dropped a little. “Wish it were under better circumstances, but welp, here we are.”

Aimsey sighed and looked over at the children playing. “Oh, I see you know Michelle.” A pensive look crossed his face, and they asked, “Are all the other ones yours?”

Tommy felt an embarrassed flush cross his face. He could barely take care of himself, and here was Aimsey, assuming that Tommy had five kids. Nope, having fuckloads of children was Phil’s thing, not Tommy’s.

“NOPE!” Tommy yelped. “The only one who’s mine is the little spider boy. And the other piglin, Michael... I’m temporarily taking care of him.”

“Does he not have his parents around?” Aimsey said rather bluntly. Were they not there on the day that Techno had announced everything? Didn’t they know?

“They’re not really... around,” Tommy lied. It burnt his tongue, lying to someone barely two minutes after meeting them. It made him feel awful and terrible, but he couldn’t say what happened out loud with the children standing right next to them.

Aimsey gave him a knowing look, one that said, “I know you’re lying about something but I’m not going to pressure you about it because you look upset.” Or it was, “tell me the truth right now before I punch your face in.” Tommy couldn’t really tell - he’d never been good at reading anyone’s expressions other than Wilbur and Tubbo. New faces meant new ways to show those expressions, which always got him confused.

They squatted down to the snow and pulled out an oxeye daisy from somewhere, most likely their bag. Aimsey twirled it in their fingers, looking at each of the pure white petals absently. Tommy just stood, unsure of what to do.

Thankfully, a distraction presented itself in the form of Wilbur walking over.

“Hello Tommy!” Wilbur said in an unusually happy voice. Tommy eyed him uneasily, because the last time he’d seen him this happy was when he’d started the drug van.

“Hello, Wil. Do you need something?” Tommy asked carefully.

Wilbur nodded, then noticed Aimsey sitting on their heels next to Tommy. “Oh? Who’s your new friend, Tommy?”

“I’m Aimsey,” they said politely. They stood, but barely came up to Wilbur’s height. The taller man looked down at him in surprise, but politely held out a hand for Aimsey to shake.

“Why is everyone here so fucking tall?” they asked in surprise. “The shortest person I’ve met here is Skeppy, and he’s shorter than I am!”

Wilbur laughed a shockingly normal laugh, to Tommy’s surprise. He didn’t seem as insane as usual, but the white streak tinting his hair sat there like a cruel reminder of how he’d come back.

*Tommy rushes over to the room where Wilbur and Philza are, the wreckage of Manburg smoldering and smoking like a freshly erupted volcano. He can barely hear anything after the sounds of the explosives. They had rocked the ground and sky, a wrath from the gods ripping through his ears.*

*But he doesn’t care about that. Something is wrong with Wilbur. And now Phil is here.*

*Tommy doesn’t understand why Wilbur destroyed their home. They had just won it back from Manburg - this was a moment of celebration, not a moment of destruction.*

*He ran up to the ruins of the room, and found a sight that would never leave him.*

*Philza holding Wilbur in his arms, cradling him like a young boy. Tears ran down the old man’s face, rivers of watery salt that spoke of an unfathomable grief.*

*For a moment, Tommy doesn’t understand why Philza is so upset.*

*Until he sees why.*

*Wilbur is not alive anymore. The blade of a diamond sword was run through him, hilt-deep in his chest and protruding out his back. A blank smile upon his pale lips, bleeding from the mouth. Caring brown eyes blank and unblinking, glazed over, pale like an empty snakeskin.*

*And all the blood, spilling across the blade, soaking through Wilbur’s shirt, covering Phil’s hands. Dripping from his mouth. Pooling on the floor, dripping on Phil’s robes.*

*Phil cried out in grief, a sound Tommy never wanted to hear again - a keening, heart wrenching sound, so filled with emotion that it could break any man’s heart.*

*Tommy drops to his knees, feeling his own tears run down his face. Feeling as the soft, sharp fog clouds his mind, not for the first time. Familiarity returns, numbness and pain and overflowing guilt.*

*Months later, he stood at the bottom of Wilbur’s grave as he watched his former president rise from the dead. So different, so familiar. His eyes no longer the caring brown they once were, but reddish-yellow, a cruel grin on his face.*

*That white streak in his hair, showing that he had visited Lady Death and her prisons and returned to their world, but not as he once was.*

Tommy shook his head. His memory was really getting in the way of having any kind of conversations with people who he knew.

Speaking of which, he noticed that he was now by himself with Wilbur. Aimsey had gone off to entertain the kids, and now it was just the two of them.

“Tommy, have you been doing okay?” Wilbur asked quietly. The words were spoken so softly that Tommy nearly missed them, but the stillness of the cold air made them impossible to miss.

“I’m FINE, Wilbur,” he snapped. “Why the fuck are you asking? It’s not like you give a shit.” He could hear the cold snap in his voice. He hoped it was enough to drive Wilbur away from further prying, but as per usual, no such luck. He never got lucky enough to drive Wilbur’s attention away.

“You’re not fine, Tommy,” Wilbur stated. “I’m not nearly as ignorant of you as you may think. I’ve heard your cries in the night. I’ve heard of your troubles, but an explanation from you would help me to understand.”

Tommy looked over at him, glaring angrily. Who was this guy to even think for a second that he might be able to help him?

He wasn’t there on those peaceful days. He wasn’t there when you lost them.

#### HOW COULD HE POSSIBLY HELP YOU?

The thoughts circled traitorously through his mind, and he struggled to shake them off. The fog was slowly creeping up on him again, ready to envelop him and take him away, but he couldn’t let himself fall into it again. Not when there might be a chance to learn how to save them.

Tommy felt the tears form in his eyes, and instead of saying anything, he forcefully grabbed Wilbur’s arm and dragged him back over to the bench where he’d been sitting before.

“Ow, would you please be a little more careful?” Wilbur snapped. Tommy ignored his protests and continued to the bench. He let go of his arm only when they got to it.

The bench was dusted with a few fine layers of snow, but that didn’t matter. Everything out here would be dusted with the stuff, no matter how it got there. Tommy sat and put his head in his hands, while Wilbur cautiously sat next to him. Closer than he would have liked, but he couldn’t exactly tell him off about where he was sitting.

“Why the hell did you bring me all the way over here?” he asked.

“I didn’t want the kids listening in,” Tommy muttered. He knew that in the past he would have been teased for saying something like that, but this wasn’t the past.

“Fair enough,” Wilbur said, his voice calm like a lake on a still summer day. “They shouldn’t have to listen to people here squabble like children as much as they do.”

A silence stretched between them, and it brought with it tension thicker than the walls of Pandora’s Vault.

After a few minutes, Wilbur spoke. “Tommy, I’ve been thinking about what’s happened in the past for a long time. I had thirteen years to think about it on that cursed train track-”

“Whatever you’re trying to say, would you please get it the fuck over with?” Tommy snapped. “I don’t want to listen to a long-winded speech, not right now.”

He saw his old friend flinch. A grim satisfaction that he’d hurt Wilbur flashed through him, feeling it was payback for everything he’d been through because of him.

“Look, on that day where I spoke with Phil, he made me realize something.” Wil’s voice trembled as he said Phil’s name, like the last leaf on a dying tree. “He told me that I need to start apologizing to people. No matter if they accept it or not, he said that I need to fix things with people I hurt before the grudges go too deep. That day, I... I walked past you, without a thought of how I could even begin to apologize to you.

“I’ve done so much shit, Tommy. So much. In all that time, I never realized how badly I’d hurt you. I’d taken away your home, tricked you and lied. Lying was the only thing I ever did to you.”

Wilbur took a shuddering breath. “But after this, after learning about everything that has happened since I died, I realize just how much I wronged you. You ended up living through hell, and now you’re not all here anymore.”

Tommy looked up and glared angrily at Wilbur. His friend could never get to the fucking point, and apparently he’d said it out loud as well.

“What I’m trying to say is...” Wilbur stumbled over the words, and Tommy watched as he tried to find his balance. “I... I’m so sorry, Tommy. I understand any hesitance to forgive me. In your shoes, I would never forgive what I did. I-”

Before another word could escape his mouth, Tommy couldn’t hold back his emotion anymore. The tears fell freely, and he wrapped his arms around Wilbur in a hug. He buried his head in his friend’s chest, forcing away the memory of the hilt sticking out.

“You don’t have to rant about it, you stupid bitch,” Tommy said with a laugh. “You can just say sorry and be done with it.”

He felt his friend still in shock, and then carefully put his arms around Tommy. To any outsider it looked like a normal hug, but this was special. A moment that Tommy would keep with him til the day he died. He heard Wilbur crying softly, and Tommy couldn’t help but join in the tears, each one another piece of their terrible past slowly falling away.

The day Wilbur had finally apologized for everything.

Chapter End Notes

THE LONG-AWAITED CRIMEBOYS APOLOGY THAT TOMMY DESERVES OML

And also Niki finally makes an appearance lmao, and oh my god I nearly cried.

Also longer chapter poggers.

# A Test of Wills

## Chapter Summary

Philza, still trapped deep within some unknown stronghold, puts his every waking moment against resisting being turned into a monster.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Philza screamed as pain tore through him, and the creatures around him screeched louder than his now sensitive ears could take. The room around him was dark, and his eyes were squinted so tightly from the pain that he could barely see his hands in front of him anymore.

*Not my hands anymore!*

*Those are not my hands, my hands are not clawed.*

*THIS ISN'T ME!*

His mind was a mess, and he could barely keep his thoughts together long enough to even register the fact that these weren't his hands anymore. The claws were growing horribly slowly, ripping through the skin like slow-moving, hot knives.

**You cannot resist us for much longer, Philza Minecraft,** the whispers said, slithering through his memories, his mind, his every thought. The pain that this... this thing was forcing through his mind, trying to break him.

He didn't know how long he'd been in this prison of a room, surrounded by monstrous creatures, being tortured by this thing trying to take over his mind. The transformation hurt him to the point where he could barely remember what parts of him were turning and which ones weren't. But the thing's constant mental torture made it so much worse.

His ability to even register his existence was nearly gone.

Phil was barely holding onto himself.

He was riding on one hope.

The hope that perhaps, soon, his friends and family would be here to rescue him. That they would be able to cure him, rid his mind of the horrible thing, return whatever sanity he had left.

Another scream ripped itself from his throat as he tried to force himself to his feet. The scream echoed through the room, and a low, rumbling growl came back from a few of them. One of them carefully approached and ripped at his back, rather unkindly. Phil clenched his teeth, his scattered thoughts begging for the pain to stop.

A new, sharp pain was starting to rip through his back. This one was worse than the constant, hot, bladed pain - this one was even worse, like needles made of burning lava and frigid ice at the same time sewing his skin open.

The creatures all screeched and howled as more screams of pain tore themselves through the room, the endless cries only carried by the slimmest of hopes.

#### Chapter End Notes

Updates are sometimes few and far in between, but I'm saying right now that I won't be able to update or make progress for a while after today because of getting a catheter operation. Hopefully will be back on track soon!

And yes it is a shorter chapter today because suspense is cool

# Discussions of Plans

## Chapter Summary

The leaders - and past leaders - of their respective factions come together to form a plan to save Phil. And perhaps, this time, they'll need a little helping hand...

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“It’s been weeks, Technoblade!” Wilbur shouted. “Why haven’t we done anything? We need to find Phil! From what information you’ve given us, he’s already turned into one of those things by now!”

“That’s what I’ve been trying to figure out, Wilbur!” Techno snapped. “I’ve been noticing patterns in their attacks, ever since the first day they got let out of the mansion. If you would do me a favor and not interrupt me when I’m trying to tell you about it, then maybe this meeting would easily be over by now.”

Tommy eyed Wilbur with unease. Being angry like this wasn’t usually like him. Then again, everyone in the camp’s “usual” was changing quite a bit. Even Tommy noticed a change in his behaviors.

*Only after the new people pointed them out fifteen times,* he thought begrudgingly. Aimsey and the second newcomer, Seepeakay, had noticed that his usually short temper was becoming more drawn out. Even other people that he didn’t normally interact with, like Purpled and Ponk, could see it.

It scared him that his anger was drawing out so gradually. Sometimes he could go days without blowing up, and then everything would come out over the smallest of things.

And the sharp fog in his head was at this point an ever-present thing, and it felt like walking through soft grass that had needles on their edges. Soft when he stood still, painful if he even lifted a foot. And as always, the fog and its sharp glass pierced him whenever the mere thought of his missing friends came up.

“Fine, but explain fast, Techno, or I’ll find something of yours and break it.” Wil’s cold voice carried through the tent and possibly even outside. He knew there were people from every faction outside, listening in to find out what was going to happen. Staying in a camp that was prepared for war for weeks on end was never fun.

*You would know, wouldn’t you?* his thoughts said.

"For once, I agree with Wilbur," Quackity said carefully. Despite the fact he'd gotten the shit beat out of him, he still tried to carry that air of authority, and for some reason it worked even with two black eyes and an arm sling.

"I've noticed that these things only come after us when the current infected people actually turn." Technoblade's monotone voice rang loud and clear through everyone's ears. "Once the people that they have in their possession are one of them, that's when they come after us again. I saw it happen with Sam - we were gone merely a few hours, and when they attacked he was there alongside them."

"Can I add something?" Tommy asked.

"Please make it fast, Tommy," Techno said with a sigh. "I was in the middle of a genius explanation."

Okay, so maybe not everyone's demeanor had fully changed.

"I noticed during that attack that only Tubbo and Sam were going full attack mode," he mentioned. The details had been blurry during the fight, but as he thought about it those details clicked and shone into his mind like lost puzzle pieces.

"Ranboo and Dream didn't actually do anything other than scream at the others. And they did something that made Jack feel woozy before Tubbo went in for the actual attack. I have a theory, but it's probably stupid."

"No, go on," Badboyhalo said. His colorless white eyes were wide with intense focus. "I think you may be onto something."

Tommy realized everyone was now looking at him expectantly. He cleared his throat nervously.

"Well, what if the reason the other two didn't attack is because they already did? Ranboo was presumably the one who infected Tubbo, and Dream is responsible for Sam's infection from what the Blade has told us. What if they only have one chance to infect someone after they're turned? It would explain a few things, like how the first two hung back while Sam and Tubbo went after two new targets, or why Techno clearly was injured from that fight, but hid it? If he'd gotten infected, he would be long gone by now."

The tent was silent, and Tommy realized he was standing instead of sitting in the chair he'd been given. With a sheepish grin, he sat back down quickly.

"Tommy's 'theory' does make sense if you think about it." Bad was the first to speak after a few agonizing moments of silence. "But we haven't seen these things - we'd need to actually monitor their behavior for a good while before we could come to conclusions like this."

"And how are we supposed to know that people here don't already know about it?" Eret had been mostly silent during the meeting, but her deep voice commanded the kind of attention that her kingship deserved. "Think about it - if we want to do things Bad's way, we would

have to find them first, then figure out ways to watch them that wouldn't get us killed or turned."

Bad, clearly annoyed by Eret's way, opened his mouth to speak, but before he could Techno slammed a fist down on the table.

"We do have a way to monitor them," he said. "Just because they took Phil doesn't mean they took his crows. They're still here, and they want him back too. They would be willing to help if it meant saving him."

"Why didn't we think of that?" Wilbur whispered to Tommy. Tommy shrugged, but it slightly bugged him that using the crows as surveillance wasn't something he'd thought of.

"Then it's settled for now," Eret said decisively. "We ask Phil's flock to help search for him, and once they find the creatures they monitor their behavior."

"Sounds good to me," Quackity and Wilbur said at the same time. They shot glares across the table, but didn't do anything, thankfully.

"One problem," Tommy said. "Do you guys happen to know anyone else who actually speaks Crow? Unless we have a translator for when they're reporting, this plan is useless."

A small shuffle came from the tent entrance. Everyone turned to see Michael standing defiantly in the doorway. Tommy grumbled to himself - he'd specifically told Michael to stay away from their meeting, but here was the little piglin anyway. There was pride in his eyes and he puffed out his chest.

"Michael, what did I tell you about keeping away?" Tommy snapped. He rubbed the bridge of his nose and closed his eyes.

"You said stay away," Michael said. "You never said I couldn't be in the crowd and listen. And I heard you need someone who speaks Crow. Phil taught me some before he disappeared, and his crows helped too."

"We cannot risk you getting hurt," Tommy said firmly. He could hear Wilbur and Quackity snickering, but he didn't care. "Your parents would kill me, and now that I think about it, so would Techno and Eret."

"But I want to help! I'm tired of sitting around not knowing what's going on, and I want my dads back!" His shrill cry was loud in everyone's ears.

"Tommy, for once, I think we should let him help out," Techno said. An air of regret seemed to cloud the piglin, and his words were heavy like a falling anvil.

Nobody spoke, and for a moment, Tommy watched as Eret's face showed a bunch of emotions and she looked like she was going to jump across the table and stab Techno.

But before Eret could, Michael spoke up again. "Unless you know literally anyone else who speaks Crow to the point of being able to pronounce it without chopping the words, then by all means go to them. But if not, I'm your best choice."

Everyone looked around. No one knew anybody who could speak the language well - Tommy could see it in their eyes and in the way they shuffled their feet on the dirt below. Even he didn't know enough to be able to take Michael's place, as much as he didn't want the little guy involved in this horror show.

"I think we need to give the kid a shot." Bad was the first to respond, surprisingly. "Nobody else can speak the language, and we need a translator if this plan is going to work. Even if his knowledge is somewhat limited, it's better than nothing."

Tommy watched in genuine shock as other people began to agree with Bad. And get along. Without any fighting! It was such a rare occurrence that he audibly gasped out loud, and Wilbur looked at him in confusion.

*Truly a feat, what can make them decide not to be assholes to one another.* The snide thought came and went quickly, but it didn't stop Tommy from realizing it was true. The only times that these people chose to work together were in times of, like during the wars. Any other time it was petty conflicts and friends siding with friends over something stupid.

With a relieved sigh, Tommy relaxed back into his chair and tuned out of the rest of the meet.

## Chapter End Notes

I AM OUT OF HOSPITAL LETS GO!

AND ALSO FEELING MORE INSPIRED TO WRITE NOW I WANT TO CHAPTER DUMP.

HAVE THE FEELS, PEOPLE WHO READ THIS. THE FEELS ARE COMING.

(i'm hyper if you can't tell.)

# Wishes For The Past

## Chapter Summary

Techno is contemplating everything when a stranger suddenly appears and starts asking some questions...

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The sun gently drifted down on the horizon behind the pine trees. It was a mystical sight, with the little crystals of snow being lit up in a beautiful range of oranges and yellows and reds, the rays of fading sunlight penetrating through the sharp, thin needles of the trees, the dustings of snow that occasionally fell and left a swirling trail of snowflakes behind.

Techno never really thought to take in these kinds of sights without some prodding from Phil. The old man adored anything remotely sparkly, and these kinds of snowy sunsets had been one of his favorite things to force him to look at. Sometimes they talked while watching, sometimes they didn't, but every time, they would always just kind of relax without any fear of being hurt.

He couldn't stand the thought of his best friend being trapped somewhere, never seeing these kinds of sunsets again. It was a horrible feeling, like a boulder he had to carry on his back every waking moment. Even in his sleep it never quite went away.

He knew that no one felt safe in the temporary camp that had been made. After all, if the creatures could come here so easily the first time, what stopped them from doing it again?

“Excuse me?” A quiet, tentative voice broke through his sluggish thoughts. Not one inside his head - a real voice, of a real person.

“Do you need something?” Techno tried to keep his voice from breaking. If he wanted to keep up leadership and morale, he couldn't let himself show anything other than strength, coldness, and unwavering vigilance. Not let these swamping feelings drown him like they once had to Wilbur. After all, look how that kind of mistake, of allowing the insanity to take over, had ended before.

“Um, you just looked kind of lonely, so I thought you might want some company.” Techno didn't look over to see who was talking. He didn't want to know. He didn't feel like knowing.

But sure. Company would be nice. He barely had company other than Phil anyways, so maybe new people could help.

The voices were curious, and pleaded for him to look over and meet possibly a new ally. But Techno refrained. The voices couldn't control him all the time, otherwise he'd be out stabbing things all day.

"It's a beautiful sunset, isn't it?" they said. "I've never seen one like this. All shiny and glittery."

"You're not good with describing things, are you?" Techno noted bluntly.

"Not really. I haven't been around very long."

They stood and watched as the horizon turned from the pale pastels of a starting sunset to the vibrant, violent pinks and reds and oranges, like a painter stroking their brush swiftly across their sky. It was something few people were treated to in their lives, and to witness one like this was more than Techno could handle today.

Technoblade felt the tears begin to form in his eyes. He wiped them quickly - to have this person see him cry wouldn't exactly help morale. Instead, he started talking to distract them.

"Phil loves these sunsets," he said quickly. "They're one of his favorite things on the server, and every night when the clouds were clear he'd force me outside to watch them with him. He never got over how the frost on the trees looked like little shiny fruit, or how some evenings the sun would pierce through the fog. It's something I always did with a bit of annoyance, but now, I'm not sure why I did that."

"Did what?"

"Get so annoyed at him for dragging me out here. I wish I'd appreciated it more." Techno felt his voice shiver, and cleared his throat.

"Maybe if I hadn't let him go out there, he would still be safe and able to help us. I wouldn't have to feel like... like this anymore."

"What is uh, this?" The stranger was very inquisitive, and a little too prying for Techno's liking, but he didn't want them to see him cry. He'd rather talk than let a droplet fall from his eye.

"It's like this heavy feeling, a constant weight on my back," Techno explained. He turned to the old Greek myths he loved, and remembered one example. "In Greek mythology, there was a Titan named Atlas, who was punished severely by the gods. For his punishment, he was chained up at the farthest ends of the world and forced to hold up the sky. No break, no change, just keeping it up high on his back. That's what it feels like - a responsibility to help him and keep everyone else safe and figure out how to fix this - and it's one of the worst feelings ever."

"Nobody should have to hold up the sky by themselves," they said, and it was weirdly the wisest thing he'd ever heard someone other than Phil say. "Just like how no one should have to hold up their responsibilities by themselves. Humans help one another, and when you

block them off from helping because you think you can do it alone, you make it so much less likely that you will succeed.”

They paused, and a quiet shiver passed through the air between them. “I’ve been taught a lot of lessons. Not to trust others, to backstab and keep people away so that you won’t get hurt. But doing that for too long will eventually make it so that when you need to, there’s no one to reach out to, to help you. That’s probably the strangest thing I’ve said, and believe me when I say I’ve spoken weirder words.”

“You’re oddly helpful, for someone I’ve never met before.” Techno let a small bit of gratefulness slip into his monotone voice. He didn’t realize that he needed someone to talk to, even if he didn’t say very much. The boulder weighing down on him lifted a little, even if not by much.

“Thank you, stranger,” he said, but the person was gone before he had the chance to look over and see who had actually been giving the Blood God a lecture in expressing his emotions.

The voices were pretty pissed by this, as they had wanted to know.

*Perhaps some mysteries are best left unsolved, he told them. For now.*

With a sigh that frosted into little crystals in the darkening evening, Techno turned his head and looked back at the mystical sunset, taking in every little shimmer of snow and every blade of sunlight.

And hoped quietly that wherever Phil was, he could see it too.

## Chapter End Notes

I know this isn't how most people write Technoblade but screw everything I want him to have a soft side.

Also if you're getting too invested in the story then I'd recommend following my Twitter @voidlingart because i'm gonna start putting up the monster concept designs soon.

# Light Up The Sky For Me

## Chapter Summary

Tommy reconvenes with his old companions and they begin to re-bond over past issues.  
Then the fire goes out.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

More days passed since the meeting between all the leaders of the DreamSMP. Tommy found it almost unbearable that they were still sitting around and not fucking doing anything. It was really messing with his head too, the slow, creeping tension spreading across camp and slowing the life within as well. Tommy was used to life in the fast lane - if it wasn't always going, then it was boring.

And everything around camp was so fucking *slow*. It was like nobody was really worried about the dangers of the creatures other than himself and Technoblade. It was literally a prison sentence, doing random chores and talking to people he'd either barely met or never wanted to see again, but alas, here he was.

*In the world's most boring war camp.*

Tommy didn't want to think of it as a war camp. It was more of a 'lets keep everyone in one space and safe and away from the creatures while we figure out what the hell they are' camp. But that was way too long of a description, so 'war camp' would have to do.

The sun had set hours ago, with the murder of crows constantly coming in and out of camp after the implementation of the plan to use them as spy cameras a welcome bustle. But tonight, no one was asleep in their beds, awaiting peaceful dreams or dark slumbers.

Tonight, they were all huddled around campfires, talking amongst themselves in an attempt to resolve past issues. Tommy was supposed to be there, sure, but he honestly had a feeling that he had the most things to apologize for.

The whole sitting around a campfire thing had actually been Techno's idea, which was a surprise when Tommy learned of it. "When we eventually face those things, we need a united group," Techno had explained. "So, if they try to work out their issues, and if they actually get them resolved, then we can work more efficiently."

Tommy didn't really think that peacefully sitting around a fire was possible, but everywhere in the yard, people weren't immediately killing each other, so that was probably a good start.

“Tommy! Why don’t you come join us?” A familiar voice beckoned him over at one of the campfires, and every instinct immediately began yelling at him both to go and definitely not go at the same time.

Because who else would be calling him over than Wilbur and an entire group of people who had had a huge effect on L’Manburg. Fundy, Niki, Wil, Eret... but no Tubbo. His mind expected to see the goat hybrid among these horribly familiar faces, but even just thinking the name brought up memories of his best friend being left behind in a mansion and his new face.

With a sigh, Tommy begrudgingly walked over to the flames. All intent to stay hidden from these people had been thrown out the window, because he honestly didn’t think there was much of a choice.

“There he is!” Wilbur cried joyfully, immediately wrapping an arm around Tommy, which he did *not* fucking appreciate, and ruffling his hair with one fist.

“Wil, let go of me, you zombie bitch!” Tommy said in annoyance. He heard laughter, which made the fog feel less heavy, but he still wasn’t pleased about being grabbed.

Tommy took a good look around at the people sitting at the same roaring fire. Niki was there, hair dyed a soft pink with two brown strands poking out at the front. A dark cloak rested on her shoulders, the clip for it set with a carved emerald. Other than that, she wore traveler’s clothes, and had a sword, a few knives and potions hung from her belt.

Eret was probably dressed the most regally of them all, with a red cape settled around her shoulders and a small, glistening crown upon her head. He knew that the royalty folk of the SMP were wealthy, so the fancy cape and crown didn’t strike him as odd. What did was the small L’Manburg patch sewn on her jacket sleeve.

*Maybe even the traitor regrets what she did to us, all these years later,* Tommy thought. He shook it off and kept observing.

Fundy’s hat was perched sideways on his head, with his jacket worn and the colors on it graying. He looked almost no different than the early days, minus a few more hairs than usual around his muzzle being gray, and those were probably from stress alone.

Wilbur was the only one who he had seen that hadn’t changed much over the course of the weeks. His brown hair still had that ever-present streak of white, the right side of his face still looked like it hadn’t been properly fixed, and his brown overcoat still smelled like gunpowder and smoke.

“So, Tommy, how have you been lately?” Eret asked. “Everything’s been going to shit more than usual, so something interesting must be happening.”

He laughed at Eret’s dark joke, but her words rang true in everyone’s ears.

“Nothing much, other than the usual trying not to die,” Tommy remarked, earning another laugh from the group. “I guess I’ve kind of half adopted Michael, since his dads aren’t around.”

"Well, that's good for you both!" Fundy jumped in. "He needs someone to look after him, after all. And you're doing a pretty good job at being a dad, from what I've heard."

"Thank you, Fundy, but I am not dad material," Tommy said.

The group laughed, and everyone started talking and sharing stories of things past and things they'd been doing before the whole shitshow came back to haunt them again. Tommy heard so many stories, of the burger van (which he didn't like remembering), of Fundy's place in las nevadas, of how rambunctious Michael had been while Eret kept him safe, of Niki's underground city. They were all amazing stories, so filled with everything that a good one needed - tragedy, happiness, everything.

Tommy was in the middle of his own when the campfire went out.

It had happened with no warning, and that night was not a windy one. Everyone went from amicable to war-ready in an instant, swords drawn and shields up.

"Why haven't any of the other fires gone out?" Eret demanded. And when he looked Tommy saw that she was right - no other fires were out. It was just them.

"Be ready for anything," Niki said, drawing a crossbow from her hip. They stood back to back, everyone looking in a different direction, and for a moment Tommy felt as though he was back in the early days, fighting side by side with his brethren for their home.

But today there was no home to fight for. They only fought to save those gone.

*Well, now you sound like Wilbur, with all your fancy fucking thoughts.* The little voice wasn't exactly wrong about that.

They waited. And waited. And nothing came. Nothing emerged from the dark shadows of the night or the forest, where Tommy looked with dread.

"There! I see something!"

Wilbur's call made him snap to attention, much to Tommy's annoyance. The fact that his voice could still make Tommy want to do anything made him feel sick and scared, like a dying bird faced with a hungry cat.

Everyone looked to the place where Fundy was pointing, and watched as a woman walked into the midst of their camp. Tommy pulled out a torch, but he still couldn't make out her features. And then the torch blew out like nobody's business, not like they needed to see anything.

She walked right up to Wilbur, who actually took a step back as she inspected him. Tommy heard her sniffling, and weird, double-layered crying came from her.

***"I'm sorry,"*** she whispered. ***"I should have helped you all. I should have been there for you, Wilbur."***

"How do you know?" Wilbur was cut off as the woman moved away, to look over Niki. She spent much more time looking over the other woman, so much so that Tommy nearly pulled his ax just to make something happen.

***"You were betrayed,"*** she said softly, nearly to where Tommy couldn't hear. ***"You didn't deserve tainted trust so young."***

The lady moved over to where Fundy stood. The fox looked at her anxiously, as though waiting for something to happen.

"You seem... familiar," he offered out of nowhere.

***"You did me a favor, in another time,"*** she said. ***"And you are another that I should have been there for."***

Tommy knew that either him or Eret was next on this lady's list of vague phrases, so he carefully put his blade away and prepared to be examined. But instead of going to him, she went to Eret first.

***"You may have betrayed them, but you still care,"*** she said. ***"And you will be one of the ones who figures it out."*** Tommy knew he was next. Why this creepy woman had saved his phrase for last, he had no idea, but he had a growing feeling of dread in his stomach that he couldn't shake off. As though something was happening elsewhere that demanded his immediate attention, but that he couldn't get to in time.

As though someone needed his help. And he wouldn't be there for them.

***"You are the next they choose after they take their young,"*** the lady whispered. No inspection, no nothing, just an immediate creepy thing. She paused for a moment, and dropped her head. ***"It is too late. The Beloved family is whole again. Now, they seek you."***

"What?" Before Tommy could finish his sentence, the woman was gone. The fire reigned, and so did the torch he held. He shuddered, trying to figure out what she meant.

"Guys, look up," Niki whispered. Everyone did, and amazement shocked them into stillness.

An aurora had started up overhead, with vibrant shades of violet, blue, and green danced across the sky. The tall arches flashed and whirled like snow in a breeze, and their dances were swift and color changes just as. The stars behind them did not fade, only glowed brighter, lit like the most potent of soul lanterns. It was like the gods were painting the sky into evermore beautiful colors, from sunrise to sunset and every time in between. Streaks of white sparked like snow, the greens twirled like grass in a breeze, the blues waved like the ocean and the violets like blooming flowers.

Tommy had never seen an aurora before now, and yet it was a sight more beautiful than he could ever have imagined.

*I don't think anything any of us create will ever be able to compare to this. And I don't think I'll ever see anything as beautiful ever again.*

He sat and watched with his comrades, eyes jumping from one arc to the next. He let his worries melt away, let the fog disappear, and let himself just be in the moment.

-+=-

Elsewhere in the camp, Technoblade watched as the auroras joyfully danced across the sky. He knew everyone in camp was gaping in awe at the magical sight, pointing to them and speaking excitedly. This was probably their first aurora, and it was the most amazing one he'd seen in thousands of years.

*And it was his last.*

Techno couldn't help but remember what Phil had said one day, when they were discussing things as they built a home in the Antarctic Empire. They'd been carving out the ice, wearing out their pickaxes, discussing how they would want to go down.

"I'd want to go down fighting the worst bad guy," Techno had said jokingly. "You know, for the glory. And maybe the clout. Clout is always good, y'know?"

"Kristen and I have talked about it before," Phil had said in return. "I told her that when I go, I want her to send up the most beautiful aurora the world has ever seen and just kinda leave it there for a few weeks, as a memory."

"Oh, Phil," Techno had said with an eye roll. "You and your pretty sights. You'll never get over 'em, will you?"

"Nope!" Phil had cried, and they both laughed and had continued their work.

*He's gone. I'm never going to see him again.*

*Wherever you are, my friend, I hope you find the peace you were always looking for.*

Techno looked back to the auroras, from where his gaze had drifted, and let the tears fall in silent, unending rivers.

## Chapter End Notes

Actually cried writing this chapter ending and oh my God too many feels.

I will be updating more i swear, this does take time sometimes. and yes, this is how I headcanon Phil wanting to go out.

jesus i'm just killing people left and right

# Invasion

## Chapter Summary

While watching the auroras, Tommy gets the feeling something isn't quite right after the eerie words of the mysterious woman start forming a picture he doesn't like...

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy felt a weird tugging in the back of his mind as he watched the auroras, a strange sense of urgency that he hadn't felt in days pulling him away from the pretty sight above.

*That weird woman said something,* he thought. *What was it again? The \_Beloved family was whole again or some shit?*

"Tommy, what do you think?" Wilbur whispered to him. He looked over at the man in the trenchcoat, whose eyes were wide beneath his glasses in amazement. "I feel like I've seen these before."

"I never have. This is so fucking cool."

*Wait.* His mind started to rush, pulling away from the sky above as he realized the whole of what the stranger had said. *She said they would come after me after they got their young back, then she stopped and said that the family was whole again.*

"Wilbur," Tommy said, panic starting to flood him. The man didn't look away. Tommy shook his shoulder hard. "Wilbur! WIL!"

"Gods, what is it Tommy?" Wilbur snapped in annoyance.

"Wil, that creepy lady said they were gonna come after me after they got their young back." Tommy said. "Then she stopped and said the \_Beloved family was whole again. DO YOU REALIZE WHAT THAT MEANS, WIL?"

"Calm down and tell us Tommy." Eret's deep, gentle voice soothed Tommy's panic a little, but he had a feeling Eret wouldn't be feeling very calm for much longer.

"Guys, that means that they're here, and it means that they've gone after Michael! They might already have him!"

As expected, Eret's face went from worried to furious in a half a second, while everyone else's faces turned to fear. Tommy understood why they were scared - most of them had never seen one of these things before.

*You won't even call them by their names?*

*Those creatures are not my friends. They're husks, they're empty, they don't care about us enough for us to use those names. As far as we know, our friends are dead.*

Before another word could be spoken among the group, a high-pitched squeal erupted from the tents. Nobody had to say anything, and they took off running to the tent, Tommy praying that they would get there before anyone else who was underprepared for an encounter with them.

They got there first.

Tommy ripped open the flaps of the tent that Michael slept in, expecting to just see that he was gone. Tommy wasn't sure what he would have done if Michael had been straight up gone.

But of course Michael wasn't gone when they got there.

Standing in the tent, the creatures that had once been Tubbo and Ranboo were holding him, growling at each other and hissing while Michael cried in Tubbo's arms. The piglin looked terrified, but it was clear that the bee-thing was trying to calm him down, with what sounded like a horribly mangled version of Mellohi. Surprisingly, it calmed Michael a little bit, but tears still ran free from his eye as he looked into his changed parents eyes.

"MICHAEL!" Tommy yelled. The two creatures looked up and immediately started to snarl. The taller creature's eyes narrowed, while the bee folded its two large, mantis-like claws in front of Michael, who was struggling to get out of his grasp.

Tommy didn't think. He just charged into the tent, tackling Ranboo around his midsection, a choice he immediately regretted. His face made contact with the slimy, bloody wound ripped through his torso, and as they hit the ground Tommy saw - and rather unfortunately, face planted into - his stomach and intestines.

The creatures screamed with rage, while the four other people burst into the tent in an attempt to get Michael back. Tommy didn't bother wiping his face as he quickly equipped his netherite armor and pulled out an ax. Ranboo screamed again, but instead of attacking Tommy, he shredded the tent's support beams, and it came crashing down on everyone.

Tommy barely missed getting a log dropped on his back, and everyone took cover. The monsters darted out before they could get crushed, and as the fabric and wood fell around them, Tommy was hit on the head with a smaller log, and fell unconscious.

*So much for saving Michael*, his brain thought, before the bliss took him.

Chapter End Notes

wooooooooooooo i might have the demon virus, this is gonna suck  
anyways more Tommy POV, it seems like people don't want him dead yet.  
and yes, it's a shorter chapter, but i swear the next one is longer and definitely more  
angsty because I wish for SBI enjoyers to cry their eyes out

# A Twisted Reunion

## Chapter Summary

Wilbur is fighting the creatures that attacked and invaded their camp, and is sent of to determine the threat of two incoming creatures. But what he finds at the edge of the fence doesn't bode well...

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Wilbur ducked again as the claw swung just over his head, barely moving in time to not get decapitated by this thing.

Techno had not been wrong when it came to those sketches he'd done. They had been pretty accurate, from what he was seeing right now, but they didn't do the real things any justice.

They were both imposing and terrifying at once, yet they seemed like the brainchild of a mad scientist or a horror novel writer. Wilbur rolled away from the creatures, before the Ranboo-thing could take another swipe at him.

Everyone around camp had gotten involved in trying to get Michael back. To his surprise, Eret was going after them the most, putting herself in danger of getting dismembered multiple times over.

Wilbur saw Quackity going in for a strike behind the bee, but before the ax could land a hit he was thrown backwards by a calculated swipe from one of its claws. Puffy and Niki were circling it, dancing just on the edge of its striking range and taunting it.

Currently, though, most people were fighting Ranboo. The tall, lanky thing was shockingly fast, able to dart in and claw against someone's armor before turning just as fast and hitting someone else. Wilbur had never seen such ferocity from anyone he'd known, not even from the occasional stray mobs that were found throughout the darkest areas of the server.

It was unnatural. It was just... wrong.

"TECHNO! I THINK THERE ARE MORE COMING!"

The loud shout forced Wilbur out of his daze, and he looked around quickly to see who had shouted. It was one of the newcomers, a fox, like his son. They were pointing toward the north, and to everyone's horror, he was right.

More had arrived.

"Get the children inside!" Technoblade shouted. Puffy and Niki nodded and darted away from the bee, running off to protect the kids. Techno shouted something else, but Wilbur couldn't hear it over the angry cries and scared shrieks of the people around him.

"We can't fall apart now!" Wilbur called to everyone. "We need to be united, so that we can live to fight them another day! We fight them today, we'll fight them again when they next hunt for us!"

Rallying cries echoed through the fighters as tents and supplies were destroyed and small sticks of TNT thrown at the oncoming creatures.

*I forgot how good it felt to rally the people, to fight for a unified cause together,* Wilbur's mind sang. His thoughts ran wild, but they all sang the same thing - fight for the people.

Wilbur ran over to the north side of the fence, where two more creatures had broken through the sturdy spruce wood and started wreaking havoc on everything nearby. They were both horribly spider-like, one with four legs and the other with three. The three legged one was pockmarked with holes, revealing pumping muscles and green veins. A massive hole was ripped through its torso, with no bones or organs to be seen.

The four legged creature was much larger, and on the back of each leg was a smaller foot, all of them tipped with somewhat bendy claws. Its upper body was covered in dark, shiny armor, and as Wilbur got a closer look he realized it was netherite. Where this thing would have gotten netherite, he didn't know, but he knew that automatically limited any shots to the chest he could have taken.

Wilbur ran up and tried to cut into the one filled with holes - that many entries into the body would have weakened it - but it lashed out with long, spindly fingers, nearly cutting him in the jaw. Wilbur was thrown back, and he hit a still-standing log with such force that he was almost certain his back would have broken if he'd hit it wrong. He screamed, and arguably justified reaction considering the amount of pain that split through him.

Wilbur tried to stand, but his back was so sore that he could barely even think about it. The hole-filled creature walked up and looked him over. Wilbur groaned and looked up - and the feeling of suffocating, sinking terror started to flood him.

The face looking back at him was split in half by a wide, bloody grin, with sharp teeth protruding from the mouth. Its face was cracked and sewn back together, its eyes slit and pupils narrowed.

It was Dream. But it wasn't at the same time. It was twisted and wrong and horrible. Wilbur could sense its malicious intent, rolling off of it in waves. It leaned down, and its face was way too close for comfort. A long, shuddering hiss emanated from it, and it backed away.

**"Not my prey,"** he snarled. The words were mangled and sounded like they were a struggle to say through the shitloads of teeth. **"Leave for the Crow."**

"What do you mean, 'leave for the Crow?'" Wilbur shouted. It probably wasn't a smart idea to yell at what could easily be death when it was a foot away from him, but he couldn't help

himself. “Where’s Phil? What have you done with him, you sick green bastard?”

Wilbur felt tears start to fall down his face. It was impossible to stop - he was scared, and today, he didn’t want to die. He wanted to live. He didn’t want to go like this.

A loud yell from beside him interrupted his thoughts. He looked over, and the monster did as well - just in time for the creature to be hit in the face with a nail-filled plank. He watched as the creature screamed and stumbled back, more holes filling its face as the wood stuck.

Wilbur looked over to see that his savior was Tommy, out of breath and bleeding from the head, but ready to fight. His friend’s armor was dented and scratched, but the enchantments shimmered through it in waves, slowly mending up the dents. Tommy pulled his ax from his belt, and offered a hand to Wilbur.

“You okay, Wilbur?” Tommy asked as Wilbur took his hand. He pulled him up, a grim smile on his face. Wilbur wordlessly nodded and grimaced as the pain shot through his back.

“Why... Why did you help me, Tommy?” Wilbur asked. “After all the shit I did? You could have just let me get taken, but... you didn’t.”

“Because, Wil,” Tommy said quietly. “You actually gave me a fucking apology. You showed me that you still give a shit about what happens to me. Besides,” he added. “I couldn’t let the only guy who was like an older brother to me die to that arsehole.”

Wilbur felt tears form in his eyes as Tommy spoke. He couldn’t believe it. Tommy actually forgave him. Maybe not entirely, sure, but that didn’t matter.

Tommy still cared.

And so did Wilbur.

Without any warning, Wilbur pulled Tommy into a hug, doing his best not to get his tears on the boy who had just called him his brother. Tommy stiffened at the sudden close contact, but he gave into the hug. Wilbur hadn’t felt so comforted in years. Sure, he’d felt some rough versions of this kind of happy caring before, but this was real.

*Tommy’s really here, he really cares. We’re really brothers again.*

A sudden screech from the hole-filled creature ripped them from their happy daze. They whipped around to see it regaining its balance from the ground where it had fallen, and it tore the wooden plank from its face with its long, spindly fingers. Strange green strings started dripping from them, and its face was bleeding more green blood.

“Are you with me, Tommy? Ready to finish this?” Wilbur said, drawing his sword.

“I’m with you, Wil.” Tommy replied. “One thing, though. We batter it as much as we want but we leave him alive. If we can turn them back, then he needs to be sent back into Pandora’s Vault the moment he changes back for what he’s done to our friends.”

Wilbur desperately wanted to rip this thing limb from limb, but Tommy was actually right. If there was a way to change them back, he needed to pay for what he'd done.

*He's been punished for many crimes for almost a year, he thought. And it seems like it clearly wasn't punishment enough.*

The duo looked at each other with an old spark in their eyes, a spark that hadn't been there since the first days of L'Manburg.

A smile crossed their faces, and they turned to the creature. They raised their weapons...

And the creature backed off. The smile on Dream's face seemed to grow wider, even if it looked like it never could get any wider than it already was. It drew away from them, dipping its head towards the forest. They turned to look at whatever this thing was looking at, but they couldn't see anything.

Wilbur squinted, trying to see through the foliage. Whatever was in there, if it was making the other thing back off, it was probably worse.

Unfortunately, he couldn't even begin to comprehend how right he was about that - or how terrible it truly was.

Before he could say a word to Tommy, signal for him to back away, anything that might have put him out of danger, the forest itself wailed with a loud, haunting cry. He'd never heard anything so incredibly loud or eerie, but it made him shiver and want to run screaming for his life.

Then the thunderous sound of flapping wings made him look up.

He saw them all. Crow after crow flew into the woods, echoing the same haunting cry. Their wings filled the sky in an ominous black cloud, flying into the woods as the eerie call repeated itself over and over, singing through Wilbur's mind like the lyrics to an unforgettable song.

"What in the hell is going on?" Techno's shout snapped Wilbur out of his uneasy daze as the piglin skidded to a stop next to him.

"Something new is coming out of the forest!" Tommy shouted back. "I think we need to get everyone out of here!"

Wilbur nodded. "Tommy, you go evacuate everyone, and do it without getting hurt. We still don't know if your one infection theory is right." Before Wilbur was even finished, Tommy had already rushed off to help the others.

"You ready to fight whatever the fuck that is?" Wilbur asked Techno, leveling his sword toward the trees.

"I've been itching for a fight for months," Techno said. "You know I'm ready."

The duo stood side by side as the bushes in front of them rattled. The two spidery creatures walked into the forest, and Wilbur watched his life flash before his eyes.

Then he shook his head. He wasn't going out like this.

The two creatures returned, carrying something limp and bloody between them. Before Wilbur could blink, the thing was thrown on the ground in front of them, spasming with coughs.

"What the..." Wilbur whispered.

"Wil...?" the familiar voice froze him in place. The man in front of them looked up with a pained smile, blood dripping from his mouth.

"PHIL!" Wilbur and Techno shrieked. Wilbur dropped to the ground immediately, wrapping his arms around his father and feeling tears start running from his eyes. Techno dropped as well, looking at Phil in such a panic that Wilbur thought the piglin might actually explode with worry.

"Phil, what the hell happened to you? Look, you're gonna be okay, we can get you out of here-" Techno was cut off as Phil raised a bloody hand and coughed.

"No, Techno..." Phil whispered. "I'm too far gone at this point. You saw those lights. You know you can't save me this time."

"THAT'S BULLSHIT!" Wilbur shouted. "OF COURSE WE CAN SAVE YOU! WE CAN'T JUST LET YOU DIE LIKE THIS!"

"WIL." Phil snapped. "You have to. If you take me with you all I'll be is a danger. I might hurt more people. I don't want to fucking hurt anyone."

"Phil, please, we can't let you go like this."

"Wil. You've lived without me before. You can do it again." He cut himself off with a yell of pain as more blood spilled from his mouth.

"I could then because I thought you abandoned me! I thought you didn't want me! I wanted to prove that I could be by myself, but this is different! I'm not going to let you die in my arms!" Wilbur's mind was whirling with grief, and it was drowning him again. He couldn't let his father die like this. They'd just been getting better, they'd been healing, and now it was gone in a matter of days.

*Lady Fate is cruel, yet she is kind to those whom she favors.*

*She clearly doesn't favor us.*

"Phil, please, we won't let you go like this." Techno's voice was barely heard over the cacophony of Wilbur's thoughts, but he could still hear how broken he sounded.

"TECHNO. You both need to let me go. Just fucking promise me you'll find a way to fix this. Maybe even turn us back." Phil smiled, and it was the one Wilbur had missed in all his years of wandering - the caring, loving smile that could light up a room like a floodlight.

"Phil, please, we need you here," Wilbur said, tears tracking down his face. "I need you here! You can't just leave again!"

"Sorry, Wil. I don't think I've got a choice this time," Phil said softly. His eyes teared up as well as he looked up at his best friend and his only son. Then "Back up, I think the change is starting."

No. Wilbur wasn't going to let him go again.

*If he's going, then I'm going with him.*

-+--

Phil screamed as the pain rolled through him in unending waves, as the thing in his head broke down his mind and forced him to accept the change. He didn't want to, but he didn't have the strength to fight it anymore.

He could barely hear anything, couldn't see from forcing his eyes closed as pain racked his body. He could still feel, though, and he felt Wilbur's arms around him, felt the tears soaking into his bloody robes.

Phil didn't have the strength to push Wilbur away, he wanted someone there for him, but he didn't want his son to get hurt. As much as he tried, he couldn't muster the energy.

***I've found your weakness, Angel of Death, the thing echoed inside him. Now fall to us. Your time is up.***

Phil felt his back tear open, and he screamed as two more pairs of wings spread from it, forcing new bones into places they shouldn't be, rapidly making new muscles and destroying unneeded ones.

Phil's hands elongated and became clawed, thin yet nearly unbreakable as he tried to snap them on the ground through the relentless agony. He screamed, trying not to claw Wilbur, who was still kneeling on the ground and hugging him.

A spazzing, static feeling ran through him, and suddenly he no longer felt anything. It was like his body was just completely gone, a free floating spirit who had never had a body. Any feeling he'd had was just gone - he couldn't feel anything except for his arms and his head, and Wilbur's embrace was just gone. But the pain wasn't gone. Of course it's not gone, he thought through the raging storm that his mind had become.

Something about the way his face felt was wrong, and before he even knew what had happened, skin had torn and blood flew everywhere as a long, pointed beak became his mouth. The teeth inside were forward-facing and jagged, so much so that he nearly bit off his tongue trying not to yell again.

Phil looked down one more time at his son, someone who had seen too much tragedy for his time and still powered through it however he pleased. Who had watched his home rise and fall, who had been abandoned by his parents and still found the strength to keep on without them.

The dark, whirling thing in his head eased his body's pain, a relief that he would have been grateful for had he not known that this thing was about to swallow him whole.

Thought after thought vanished into the dark embrace, and Phil only had the time to say one thing before he was well and truly gone.

"Say hello to your mother for me, will you?"

-+--

Wilbur cried as he felt his arms pass through what used to be Phil, wailed as he heard his father's last words, and let out a scream of rage as someone yanked him backwards from him.

*No, please, don't go away again, don't take me from him, he can't leave me alone again!* The thoughts whirled wildly in his mind, and try as he might, he couldn't force the hand off of the collar of his trench coat. The person grabbing him threw him back into the snow and looked at him dead in the eyes.

It was Technoblade, but he didn't look like the man Wilbur knew. He looked so absolutely broken, like his heart had been ripped out and he couldn't even mourn the loss of it. His dark eyes were nearly blank, and Wilbur couldn't even tell if Techno was feeling anything.

"Techno, please, you've got to let me go back, there's still time—"

"Wilbur, look, I'm sorry, but there isn't any more time. Look for yourself if you don't believe me."

Wilbur glanced around Techno, trying to prepare himself for what he might see. He wasn't sure what Phil would look like, and he was praying that it wasn't nearly as horrifying as the other creatures. He'd seen how weird and deformed the other things were, but he didn't want to imagine anyone he was truly close to turning into one of those things.

*It's a bit late for that, you fucking idiot.*

Wilbur was definitely not prepared for what he saw. Because it was worse.

So much worse than anything he could have thought of.

It looked like Phil - the hair, the hat, the robes - but everything else that really made him Phil was gone in a matter of minutes.

His face was no longer a face - instead, in place of a mouth, there was a long, sharp beak, and when the thing screamed he could see a row of long, pointy, forward-facing teeth and a whip-thin tongue. The beak ran red with blood from his face, dripping down it ominously and into the snow, each jeweled red bead another part of him broken.

It didn't have a body anymore, but it had arms for certain, and they were blackened and withered, the ends of the fingers clearly sharp enough to slice through anything - as the thing screamed, it was digging its claws into the dirt, leaving scars in it deeper than any careless sword swing could. They were thin, and it looked like some bits were peeling off.

The wings were no longer just a single set. Instead, there were six wings, all of them only partly feathered, and the feathered parts didn't gleam like healthy feathers. Instead they were dull and torn, some of them covered in blood from bursting out from beneath Phil's skin.

The unfeathered parts were stretched out skin, stretched so tightly that Wilbur could see veins and arteries pulsing beneath, along with pumping muscles and, disgustingly enough, occasional glimpses of bone.

As the thing started to balance itself upright, Wilbur got a clearer view of where its body had once been, and surprisingly, it wasn't bad. It was mostly just weird fog and what looked like pieces of prismarine floating through it.

Until Wilbur saw the place where the chest was supposed to be.

Instead of being completely empty, there was a floating case inside, with strings wrapped around it, and if you were just glancing at it, it looked empty with all the fog in front of it. But Wilbur wasn't just glancing. He was full-on staring in terror at the contents of the case.

It was Phil's heart, still beating, still pumping blood to arteries and taking in blood from veins, and the stringy transports were all there, connected through holes in the case, and they just floated there.

The worst part about this thing had to be the terrifying amount of eyes.

There were eyes on the rims of the case, each one moving and blinking individually. There were eyes on the golden rings that made up his neck, eyes on the backs of his hands, eyes on the beak and eyes on the robes, even floating around in the fog that made up whatever was left of him. The creature looked up at him, and Wilbur saw more, all of them surrounding his regular eyes and poking out from his face at random intervals. But the worst part of the whole eyeball thing were Phil's regular eyes.

They were blank and dull, no pupils or iris' to be seen. Just white eyes, like an empty bug husk or a washed out seashell, the only break in the pale color being the small veins that snaked up along the sides and circled the middle like they were trying to form a center to look through. It was just so wrong.

"Techno, what the fuck is that thing," Wilbur spat, jerking backwards into the snow as the Piglin looked over to see the new monster.

"Whatever it is, it's not Phil." Techno's cold voice echoed through the still air. "Not anymore."

**"Techno, Techno, why ever would you think that, mate?"** The voice that came from its mouth was Phil's - it had the same accent, the same way of speaking - but there was no

emotion other than malicious glee in its voice, and there were higher and lower pitches constantly overlapping and making it sound possessed.

***“We do believe that it’s your turn now,”*** the thing said with a hacksaw grin. ***“But of course, only one of you can join us at once. Limitations do exist, you know very well.”***

*So Tommy’s theory was right, Wilbur thought in shock. He was right about them only being able to infect one person.*

***“But where’s the fun in infecting just one of you?”*** It continued. Its eyes pierced into Wilbur’s soul and froze him in place. He desperately wanted to scream, to fight, to run away, to do anything, but he couldn’t.

***“How about we bend the rules a little bit?”*** the creature said, every single one of its eyes locking with Wilbur’s own. ***“How about we try something... new... for a change?”***

Before Wilbur or Techno could have even thought of moving the creature had its thin, withered claws pinning them to the ground, using a level of force that would have broken Wilbur’s ribs if he dared try to get out of it or even just move an inch.

***“One wound for you,”*** it hissed, biting down into Technoblade’s neck with vicious speed and violence. Wilbur heard the piglin start to choke and gasp, and as he looked over he saw blood begin to discolor the snow below him.

***“And one for you,”*** it hissed, but before it could strike Wilbur spoke.

“Please, Phil, you’re better than this. I don’t want to die this time. I don’t want to die again. I don’t want to be sent back to that place!” Wilbur’s pleas were desperate, but in his mind he knew there wasn’t anything he could say to get out of this. He was really going to die. Phil was really going to kill him again.

It was a bittersweet end this time. The first time Wilbur had truly died, he’d been begging Phil to impale him against his protests, and eventually, Phil had done it anyway. Now, Wilbur was begging him not to kill him, and yet he knew that Phil was going to do it anyway.

***“It won’t hurt for long. Besides,”*** it said, leaning closer to whisper in Wilbur’s ear. ***“I think it’s about time your unfinished symphony finally came to an end. Don’t you?”***

Wilbur’s eyes widened as he remembered the words he’d spoken to Phil that dawn, in the remnants of the detonation room, echoing through his head like nothing else in the world mattered except for those words.

*My unfinished symphony, forever unfinished!*

*I suppose no song can go incomplete forever.*

*I just never thought it would be cut short so soon.*

Before another thought could form in his mind, before he could scream, the creature plunged its beak into the center of Wilbur’s chest, right where he’d been impaled the first time. He

screamed as pain bloomed through him like unfolding flower petals.

Then everything went dark.

And Wilbur shed one last tear, dropping off his face and sinking into the flower of blood blooming beneath him, forever lost to the sea of glittering red.

## Chapter End Notes

I SAID THERE WOULD BE SBI ANGST AND I DELIVERED.

i know this is a chonky frickin chapter but i had to combine all this otherwise it would feel too spotty with the amount of POV switched in every chapter, so i just mashed it all together into a mega boi.

# Injured

## Chapter Summary

Tommy is scrambling to help people, but something isn't right with him...

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

All Tommy could see was the wreckage of the camp, fires burning, and people running and shouting, checking to see if others were okay and alive and unhurt. He was also rushing from person to person, bandaging any wounds he could and calling for Puffy's help when he couldn't fix something.

"Tommy! Get your ass over here!"

Speaking of which. He looked over to see Niki waving him over to another injured person. Tommy pulled out the spare bandages he had in his inventory and rushed over them.

"Who got hurt?" Tommy asked.

"Eret," Niki explained quickly. "She was the one who was doing most of the work trying to get Michael back from the creatures, and it was because of that horrible bee thing that they got hurt."

Tommy looked down at the king of the SMP, and he could see deep claw marks in her arms and shallower ones across her chest. The netherite she'd worn as protection (they'd advised everyone to have the strongest netherite possible) was torn in nearly in half, with the sharp edges of the broken armor making it difficult to get it off without accidentally cutting his hand.

Tommy did end up cutting his hands getting the armor off, but he ignored it. It wasn't until he tried to put the bandages on that Niki grabbed the bandages from his hand and started doing it herself.

"Why-"

"Tommy, your hands are bleeding from where the armor cut you and you're not in good shape either," Niki snapped. "You're bleeding from the head and you've got a limp, and your armor is dented to the point where I'm dead certain that you've got a few broken ribs. Go find Puffy and get yourself taken care of, Tommy. You've done enough to help for now."

"But there are still injured people, Niki," Tommy said desperately. Now that she'd pointed out his injuries, he was starting to feel them pretty badly. His head felt fuzzy. "I've still got

bandages.”

“TOMMY. Listen, you’ve done enough, now go rest!” Niki’s eyes met Tommy’s own, stern and concerned for him.

“Maybe... maybe you’re right,” Tommy said. His head felt too fuzzy to say much, and his sight was starting to go dark in some places. He barely heard Niki as she asked him something. A sound of concern came from Niki, but Tommy heard none of it.

Before he could even try to keep himself awake or regain his senses, he was face down in the snow next to Niki and Eret, out completely cold.

#### Chapter End Notes

Aaaa sorry for long time betwee updates, this takes a while to write

Anyways poor Tommy he's overstressing everything

and i know it's a short chapter but y'know what a short chapter is a short chapter. PLus it makes suspense which is always nice.

# A Brewing Theory

## Chapter Summary

Niki and Puffy start talking about what they think might be causing the problems, and they think that they might have found the problem...

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“The kid’s working himself way too hard,” Puffy explained to Niki. “That, plus whatever he was doing before fighting, battered him to hell and back. He’s been perpetually exhausted for days, too.”

“Is there anything you can do?” Niki asked.

“Just letting him rest and not telling him anything until he’s ready to handle it again. Especially not about...” Puffy trailed off and Niki looked at her in concern. It wasn’t like her to withhold information willingly.

“What happened?” Niki demanded, gently putting a hand on her shoulder. A sigh rattled through her before she answered.

“We found a lot of blood near the fence where he, Techno and Wilbur were fighting off the new creatures. Not to mention some discarded skin and feathers. We looked, but we couldn’t find Wilbur or Techno in the dark. We’re worried that something might have taken them, but if not, we have to hope that they can keep themselves safe until we can find them.”

“Oh gods,” Niki whispered. Now all of the Syndicate members were in trouble. Techno was missing, Phi was missing, and Ranboo was pretty much dead. And now Wilbur was missing too, one of the people she’d started to tolerate again.

*Why would you start tolerating him of all people? The snarky voice in her mind played out a thread of regular thoughts like a broken record. He betrayed your country. He betrayed you. You can’t trust them, not after everything that’s gone down. Trust is for the weak.*

*Shut the fuck up, will you? I’m trying to focus on other things,* Niki snapped at the voice.

*You know I’m right, Nihachu I’m always right about the traitors.*

“I can’t believe that they might be gone too,” Niki said aloud. Puffy put her own arm around Niki’s shoulders, and Niki felt tears start to run down her face. It was something she’d gotten used to - crying if something went wrong, to mask her anger. Better to let people think she

was a weakling than to let them think that she was ready to burn down a whole village on a day-to-day basis. Which she was, but again, no one needed to know that.

*“Who else got hurt?” Niki asked. Surely there couldn’t just be Tommy and Eret who were badly injured.*

*“Tommy took care of most of them, but some people are still in pretty bad shape.” Puffy sounded so sad, so downtrodden. Niki honestly couldn’t stand seeing someone she cared about looking so upset.*

*“Are they going to get better?” Niki asked, her voice quiet.*

*“They will, but it will take time,” Puffy whispered back. “And I don’t know how much time we have until those things come back for more of us.”*

*Puffy leaned into Niki’s shoulder, and she did nothing about it except put her head on Puffy’s. She’d missed her fiancee, even if the two had seen each other every few days after the whole mess with the Eggpire. They’d nearly broken it off after one of the wars - Niki couldn’t remember which one at the moment - but the two had worked something out and things were going better now.*

*Wait a second...*

*“Puffy, do you think those things are being controlled by something else?” Niki’s sudden question made Puffy immediately raise her head.*

*“Maybe,” she said hesitantly, “because some people said they’ve heard them try to talk to us before. I was around Tu- the bee creature when it started making really creepy noises.”*

*“Do you think that the Egg might have something to do with this?” Niki asked. She felt like she was onto something.*

*Puffy’s eyes lit up with sudden enthusiasm. “You might be right about that!”*

*She stood suddenly and grabbed her red coat, throwing it on and tossing Niki hers before she could register that something was happening.*

*“Wait, Puffy, what are you doing?” Niki demanded in surprise.*

*“We’re going to visit a certain red egg and see if we can make it give us our friends back,” Puffy said coldly. She spat out the word egg like it was a rotten piece of meat.*

*“But, what if it takes us over and starts controlling us?”*

*“There are some things at Church Prime that can guarantee us our safety down there. We need to get there first and then go to it.”*

*“But what about everyone else?” Niki asked. “What if they come back while we’re not here?”*

*"There are enough of us left to defend the injured without our help," Puffy said. She took Niki's hands in her own and looked into her eyes. "Niki, we need to do this, otherwise they might be lost forever. Hell, we might get turned and then no one will be able to stop them. You have to trust me."*

*Can't trust, she'll betray you, she's lying, Niki's thoughts sang. She didn't trust anyone anymore, but if there was any chance of ending this mess, she would probably have to.*

*"Alright, Puffy. I trust you."*

*"Good. Then get your coat on and grab your best armor. We need to leave right now."*

## Chapter End Notes

hehehehe maybe the villian appears?? idk still thinkin on it

maybe, just maybe.

and yet my braincells are really tired and this takes a while, but I appreciate you funny little people inside the screens who enjoy it.

# Slithering Departure

## Chapter Summary

Puffy and Niki pick up two unexpected travel companions on their way out of camp, and find something else that doesn't bode well for their trip...

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Where are you two headed to?” Puffy heard her son’s voice before she saw him. A small sigh escaped her and she turned to see Foolish darting up beside them.

“Oh, Foolish, honey,” Puffy said politely. “We’re headed to Church Prime to get those Egg-resistant suits.”

The totem looked completely dumbfounded, but as Puffy’s words sank in unease took over his expression. “Why would you need those? The Egg is long-buried, the only things we ever would use that for is if some complication arose...”

Niki jumped in with no warning. “We think that the Egg might have something to do with those monster creatures. We’re going to get the suits and ask if it’s involved.”

“By yourselves?” he asked in shock. “Don’t you realize how risky that could be?”

“Yes, Foolish, we know,” Puffy said. She tried not to sound too patronizing as she spoke. “But we wouldn’t be going if we didn’t think we had any other options.”

“Who’s going to take care of the sick if you leave, though?” he reasoned. “You’re one of the few people here who actually know how to perform surgeries if they need to happen, and you’ve got the knowledge for when people are hurt.”

“I’m the only one here who might be able to get close enough to the Egg without getting fully corrupted again,” Puffy snapped suddenly. “I wouldn’t be able to trust people like Ant or Bad with this kind of thing!”

“And what about the monsters?” Foolish continued on as though he hadn’t heard her protest. “We don’t know where they are, and if you run into even one of them you could be killed, or worse, turned!”

“I’ll be fine if I get killed, I still have all my lives!” Puffy retorted. She did not want to think about what might happen if she was turned, or how horrible it might be.

But this was something that needed to be done. Something that had to be looked into, otherwise all hell might break loose.

“Foolish, listen to me, hun. We need to do this. The Egg might be the source of this, and if we can stop it, we might be able to save everyone else.” Puffy didn’t like to think that she was pleading with Foolish to let her leave, but if begging was what had to happen, she would do it. Puffy would not let her son turn into a monster because of that thing.

“Well, I’m going with you then,” Foolish declared. “If it is the Egg, I’m not about to let it hurt anyone else ever again.”

“I’ll come with you as well.” A new voice joined them, and all three turned to see Eret limping over, using her ax as a crutch.

“Eret, NO. You should be resting-” Niki was cut off as the king raised her hand.

“I will not stand by and rest while my people and the people of others are changed beyond recognition. Besides,” she added with a lighthearted laugh, “I’ve still got some atoning to do.”

“Then I suppose it’s settled,” Puffy said sternly. “All of us are going to get those suits. We need to be quick about it, though. I don’t know how much longer those creatures are going to take before they start roaming further than Snowchester.”

Niki grinned and put her hand in Puffy’s. “Let’s go see if we can save everyone.”

-+--

The group left camp as soon as they had informed the others where they were going. Even after a lot of protesting from them, Puffy knew it was the right choice to go.

Bad, Ant, Hannah, and Skeppy were reasonably angry with their choice - the Egg was not something to be trifled with, as they especially knew what happened when it got ahold of someone’s mind.

“You actually want to talk to that thing again?” Bad had shouted.

“It might be the cause of all this!” Puffy yelled in return. “We could save our friends by going there!”

Puffy hated arguing with them, but this was necessary, in her mind. If they didn’t, who would?

And besides, she knew something about the Egg that no one else did. When they had first started growing attached to it through its mind control, it had latched onto her and decided that it didn’t want her getting away from it. Even though she eventually had, every time she’d needed to go back into the same room as it she heard it calling her, begging her to come back. The Egg wanted her specifically, and she had been around it long enough to know why.

*Because I'm strong enough to take it down. Because it wants that strength for itself, and it doesn't want me to kill it. The Egg knows I could easily get rid of it if I looked into a solution long enough.*

Puffy sighed and looked at the group of people following behind her in the vast, snow covered land. Foolish, her only son after she'd disowned Dream; Eret, king of the SMP who was trying to make up for her past mistakes; Niki, who was so hurt and angry all the time that she was surprised that she hadn't imploded yet.

Puffy faintly heard boots crunching in the snow next to her, and her mouth slanted up into a happy smile.

Speaking of her fiancee.

"Puffy, if we want to get to Church Prime quickly, shouldn't we go through the Nether?" Niki asked.

She facepalmed. Why hadn't she thought of that?

"Yeah, you're right. There's a portal somewhere around here, right?" she asked. Niki nodded and took her arm, leading the group to a Nether portal only a couple hundred blocks away from the fence. Foolish put an arm around Eret and started helping her walk across the snow-covered ground. Even though she kept insisting she could walk on her own, Foolish was doing his best to keep helping Eret. His efforts were actually quite admirable, in Puffy's opinion.

*You're his mother, you're somewhat biased,* Puffy thought to herself. Oh well. Biased or not, he was doing a pretty good job.

The portal's swirling purple mist signaled to Puffy that it was there before she really saw it. It was a once broken down, ruined portal, based on the way its outer stone frame was only half finished. The whooshing, somewhat underwater sounds that it made rang in her ears as the group approached.

"I always forget that these lead to hell," Foolish said. "They look so pretty on the outside."

"You're not wrong," Niki said. "The mist is somewhat pretty."

"We don't have time to stand around and gawk at the portal," Eret reminded them. "We need to get to Church Prime for those suits."

Puffy nodded, and without another word, went to take the first step into the portal. And she would have stepped in were it not for a scream from Niki.

"Niki, what the hell-" Eret's question was cut off by Foolish yelping in surprise, and Puffy turned around to look down at what they were all freaking out over. She had a feeling that she knew - she'd spent enough time with Niki to know that only one thing could make her freak out like that.

And indeed, as she turned around, she saw it - a silvery, wriggling shape on the ground, moving toward the Nether portal with speed that a snake shouldn't have.

"Would you three calm down?" Puffy said. "It's just a small snake. It's not gonna bite."

"You don't know that!" Niki snapped, scrambling up beside her.

They all watched as the silvery snake made its way into the Nether, and as Puffy took a closer look, she noticed something off about it - it wasn't slithering in the way a normal snake would, or in a way that seemed natural at all. And its scales weren't natural either - no snake she'd ever seen or heard about had scales that metallic.

"Are we still debating that 'lets take the Overworld' route that you were originally planning?" Niki asked.

"Nope, we're still going into the Nether." Puffy said it as confidently as possible, but something told her that even if they took the Nether route something was going to happen.

"Are you sure Eret can walk that far?" Foolish asked.

"Eret can figure that out for herself," the king snapped. "And yes, I think I can walk that far. We'll be fine."

Niki looked spooked by the news that they were going into the portal after the snake-thing, and Puffy slipped her hand into hers.

"Don't worry, you'll be fine," Puffy reassured her. "If that snake comes back, I'll get rid of it for you. No creepy thing is gonna get you, I promise."

Niki didn't say anything, but her smile was all that Puffy needed to know that she appreciated the gesture.

"Now, onward into the portal!" Puffy said. And without another word, Puffy dragged Niki into the portal, and the purple mist clouded her vision as she walked into the depths of hell.

## Chapter End Notes

holy shit 21 chapters? damn I haven't been paying attention to how many chapters i've made wows.

in all seriousness, i hope you guys enjoy this, it takes a lot of time and i'm actually very proud of how it's turning out.

and yes, these are currently shorter chapters because exams exist, i promise a longer chapter soonish

and Happy Pride Month!



# Blunt Truth

## Chapter Summary

Tommy wakes up from his faint spell, but the person sitting on the end of his bed doesn't have good news...

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy woke up laying on a medical bed.

This really shouldn't have come to him as a surprise - he'd taken one hell of a beating during those fights - but it still surprised him that he'd even managed to make it here before passing out.

He looked around, trying to see if he was alone. And to his shock, he wasn't alone.

Sitting next to him, filing his nails like nobody's business, was Quackity.

“What-”

“Stay down, Tommy.” Quackity’s stern voice made him stop in his tracks. “You’re still not cleared to get up again. At least not till your head wound is healed enough to make sure you won’t walk around without passing out on the spot.”

Gratefully, he laid back down. He didn’t want to get up anyways - it made him feel dizzy trying to do it the first time.

“What happened?” he asked feebly. His voice was rough and creaky, like he hadn’t used it in years.

“One hell of a fucking fight, that’s what happened,” Quackity said. “After you found the monsters, everything was falling apart left right and center. It was pretty crazy. I’m surprised you only got out of there with a head wound and a few injuries from a log falling on you.”

“What about everyone else?” he asked. “Are they okay?”

Quackity shuffled his wings - they weren’t often seen, but they were a trademark of his Avian descent. The candlelight in the tent illuminated the red glow of the fabric around them, and the entrance of the tent had little hints of smoky sunlight drifting through it.

“Most everyone else is somewhat okay - I guess as okay you can be after that kind of attack on the place where you’ve been sleeping for weeks. There are some people who are injured,

but other than those few along with yourself. And there are a couple of people... missing.”

Tommy bolted upright in bed. “What the fuck do you mean by missing?”

“I mean missing,” Quackity said. “That night, two people went completely missing. We found a lot of blood by where they’d been fighting off some monsters, and some drag marks leading off into the forest.”

Tommy felt distraught. More people were missing. That meant more monsters were going to be showing up soon, which meant more problems to deal with.

“Quackity, who disappeared this time?” he demanded. “Who the fuck is missing now, because I swear to Prime above I’m going to blow something up.”

“Tommy, you might not be ready to hear this...” Quackity warned.

“QUACKITY, STOP PUTTING IT ON FUCKING PAUSE AND TELL ME WHO THE BLOODY HELL IS GONE NOW?” Tommy’s shout startled Quackity, and the avian’s wings flicked open in surprise. He sighed and looked down, his wings dropping low next to him.

“Tommy... the people who went missing are Technoblade and Wilbur. We have no idea where they went after they both left to fend off those other two monsters. We don’t know what happened, but with the amount of blood that we found, it’s pretty likely that they were taken.”

“Wil and Techno are... gone?”

Tommy couldn’t hear anything anymore. He couldn’t even hear his own creaky voice whispering their names, over and over. Quackity said something, but Tommy still couldn’t hear. A ringing had filled his ears, drowning out every little noise except for his own thoughts.

Tommy retreated into his head, but immediately wished he hadn’t. The fog had rolled in heavier than ever, the bits and pieces of painful glass slicing at him with every memory and thought of his lost friends that passed through the fog.

*The glass is a weapon, it hurts, I don't want to think about this anymore, I DON'T WANT TO THINK ANYMORE!* The grief circled through like buzzards on the hunt for dying flesh.

A memory of torn, ripped flesh flashed through him, and he flinched away from it. It was awful, and he could only imagine what might happen to Phil, Wilbur and Techno now. The monstrous forms took shape in his head, a mess of blood, holes, and feathers.

Tommy tried to stop the imagined creatures, tried to force them out of his head, but no matter what kind of shield he tried to put up nothing worked. The glass memories kept shattering them, letting the monsters in, letting the pain in, both real and - no, it was all real.

Tommy screamed out loud, and he gripped his arms so tightly that he drew blood, all while repeating their names like a cursed chant that he couldn’t shake.

He barely heard as Quackity called for help. He barely saw as people came into the tent. He hardly even noticed as someone gave him a sleep potion to knock him out again. He wasn't even aware of his head hitting the pillow again.

He fell into nightmares, horrible nightmares of glass and monsters and fog.

#### Chapter End Notes

wooooooo two updates in one day, something must be strange

I need to stop torturing Tommy oml

# Where The Townsfolk Fled

## Chapter Summary

the group is making their way through the Nether to confront the Egg for its crime, but as they make their way in, they realize that they've found hundreds of missing people, and that they're not alone.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The Nether was a hot, oppressive, terrible place, as per usual. Niki was tempted to just run through it like she normally would, but nope, not an option with an injured person following along behind. Instead, she could only confidently lead the way for her comrades through hell.

The netherrack below their feet was warm, and had it not been for the netherite boots their feet would be burning up entirely. Niki looked out over the underworld, and the only things that met her eyes were the expanses of bridges, lava, and netherrack. By their feet, the few plants that could grow here pushed their way through the hot rocks and spread over them like carpets.

She heard footsteps coming up behind her, and she whipped around, ready to pull out her sword. But to her relief, it was just Puffy.

“Niki, I’ve got a question,” the ram hybrid said. “How do you know the path through here? You look like you’ve come this way a thousand times, yet never once have I seen you go this way.”

“I used to go out to Techno’s place to get help with battle training and upgrading my gear,” Niki lied. Okay, kind of lied. The battle training and gear upgrades weren’t completely untrue - Techno and Phil knew which enchantments you’d want to put on what piece of equipment depending on what you planned to use it for, and they seemed to know every battle tactic, new and old.

Puffy’s expression changed, and something in her eyes told Niki that she wouldn’t like whatever she asked next.

“You’re not telling the whole truth, are you?”

Niki stiffened. Puffy wasn’t wrong. She hadn’t told her about the Syndicate - no one was allowed to know about it until they’d been accepted by Protesilaus and Zephyrus.

*But they’re gone, she thought. The entire Syndicate is gone except for me. Protesilaus and Zephyrus aren’t here to call the shots anymore. I am.*

*And I say that my fiance gets to know about it.*

“Before I do tell you,” Niki said carefully, “what’s your opinion on anarchy?”

“Better than all the shit that’s happened because of people trying to take control here,” Puffy answered. “The only thing that’s come of a government of any kind has been tragedy and hellfire. The Eggpire showed me that when they killed my son in front of me.”

*That sounds like a good motivation to take them down, don’t you think? her mind whispered. If they killed someone you loved, wouldn’t that be a good motivator for revenge?*

Niki took a breath. “Why did you want to know?” Puffy asked.

She sighed, and her voice dropped to a whisper. “I’m a part of a little underground movement dedicated to taking out all forms of government of the server. We want the kind of chaos that anarchy brings to reign, not the kind that the Eggpire or L’Manburg brought. We want people to be able to make their own choices. There shouldn’t be anything available for people like Dream to try and control. It would be freedom. You wouldn’t have to watch someone you care about die in front of you.”

Puffy’s eyes widened. Niki continued.

“We’ve been quietly gathering up a few members - I’m one of them - and as of right now, most of them are either dead or missing. So I’m gonna ask you - would you care to join the Syndicate?”

Puffy stayed quiet for a few minutes as they walked, and Niki felt a quick flash of panic. Had she done something wrong? Was Puffy mad at her?

“I don’t know, Niki,” she said after what felt like forever. “The last time I joined a cult, I nearly got mind-controlled into killing people. How can I be sure that you’re not trying to drag me into something like that?”

Niki was about to answer when they heard a yell from Foolish.

“Guys, the snake thing is back!”

“Oh for - Niki, can we finish this conversation another time?” Puffy asked. Without another word, Niki nodded and they both ran back toward the pair.

Nothing was initially wrong when they found Foolish and Eret. Niki looked around quickly, but no sight of the snake came to her, thank Ender.

“Where is it, Foolish?” Puffy asked.

He simply pointed at a spot hidden behind a pile of netherrack that Niki couldn’t see. Eret looked shaken, Foolish was downright horrified. Puffy walked around, ax drawn, and when she saw whatever it was she took a few steps back.

“What in fresh hell’s name...” she whispered.

Niki pushed away the fear of the snake for a moment, and stepped around the outcropping of netherrack to see what was scaring them all so much.

And immediately, she wished she had chosen to stay blind to what it was.

Lying on the ground, skin melting into the burning rocks below, was a person. To Niki's shock, they were somehow still breathing, but within a few days they would probably be long beyond saving.

Their eyes stared up at the Nether roof, boundless and bare, and despite the fact that they were still breathing it didn't help their case that it looked like something was eating them from the inside out. There were jagged holes everywhere, and it gave the group an unfortunately good look at their innards.

Jagged, punctured breaths came from them, and in some she could swear she heard words.

She went to lean in closer, but Foolish yanked her back.

"Don't," he whispered. "That's where I saw the snake thing go. I think it might be eating him."

She immediately darted away from the corpse, not wanting anything to do with a man-eating snake. Any snakes, really, but ones that ate people especially.

"Fucking hell," Eret whispered. "There's another one over by the ridge."

They turned to see another body, this one much further along in death's grasp, lying near the edge of the cliff dropping into lava. Somehow, they were still breathing too.

The group started really looking around, and more bodies started to show themselves in the area. One torn in half over there, three with their heads gone over that way, a pile of mostly legs, arms, and lungs behind them.

"Prime above," Foolish said. "This is awful. They're random people - they didn't have anything to do with this before, but now..."

Puffy walked over to the three missing their heads. "Not just random people, Foolish," she announced. "Former L'Manburg citizens. People from Snowchester. People from the Greater DreamSMP. The Nether could be where they're stashing their prey, since time runs differently here and they won't die half as fast. They've been dying here and we haven't even thought to look for where the people went after they were evacuated."

Niki felt a slow, creeping feeling of dread run down her spine like a cold claw. Something about this wasn't right. The monsters weren't that smart, were they?

"But how would they know that time runs slower here?" she asked. "They're completely gone. They don't talk, and I highly doubt that they'd even remember things like this."

"Unless they're smarter than we thought they were," Eret offered, mirroring Niki's thought.

“Can we please get a move on?” Foolish asked. “I don’t want to be around these corpses for much longer than we need to be. The netherrack makes them smell awful.”

Everyone agreed, and Niki continued to lead the group down the bridges that connected Techno and Phil’s place to the rest of the SMP. The amount of bodies littering the ground diminished the further away they got from the portal, and by the time they stepped onto the first bridge, there were only one or two dotting the ground every thirty feet or so.

While they walked, Eret noticed one body that seemed a little out of the ordinary, and half-heartedly kicked it with her uninjured foot. No one thought anything of it - until a whirring drone started up behind them.

Puffy immediately whipped around, as did everyone else. Niki scoured the ground, praying that the bodies hadn’t somehow gotten up and started moving on their own, because if they had she would lose her fucking mind.

What she actually saw had to be worse.

The corpse that Eret had kicked was... wriggling. And not in an “about to collapse into dust” way. In the “there is something definitely inside that thing” way. It kept writhing, like it was in pain, and out of nowhere the faint, shaky breathing they’d all grown so accustomed to stopped dead.

“Eret, what did you do?” Niki demanded. Is she trying to get us killed?

“All I did was kick it!” Eret protested. “How the fuck was I supposed to know it would start doing this?”

Another sound reached Niki’s ears, and it was one that made her shiver - the sound of slithering bodies approaching from the path that they’d just left

She looked back and froze in place.

Snakes. Hundreds of the same, silvery snakes made their way toward them with haste, but as she looked closer at them, even if she didn’t want to, Niki saw that they had no eyes or mouths. Not even a nose. They simply looked like wires, their silver glinting maliciously in the lava’s light.

Everyone stepped back as the body nearest them moved one more time, and one of the snakes emerged from its open mouth. Niki couldn’t help herself - she screamed and darted behind Puffy.

In unison, they all slithered into a hole next to the bridge and vanished. The sound went away, the snakes went away, and then there was nothing except the stifling heat and pops of the lava below.

“The fuck was that?” Puffy asked.

“How are we supposed to know?” Eret said. “I’ve never seen snakes like that before, much less behave this way.”

"Yep, definitely time to get moving," Foolish declared.

In silent agreement, the four sped up the pace as much as they could, making their way down the bridge quickly.

Completely unaware of the fact that the hole they'd passed was a nest for a friend they'd forgotten entirely.

## Chapter End Notes

oh god oh no man-eating sneks. how spooky.

anyways yeey more chapters to the spoopy story this is coming along well.

Next chapter will be longer, I promise. And next time, if you're reading close enough, you might notice something off about some of the dialogue...

:)

# That Little Voice in Your Head

## Chapter Summary

Tommy wakes up from a three-day sleep, feeling extremely sick. Not only that, but to him it feels like there's *something* wavering on the edge of his mind, and he can't help but feel like something's... wrong.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy woke up feeling exhausted and very much sick.

He wasn't sure how long he'd slept for, just that it was way too long. He was sure about the fact that he was hungry, and thirsty, and definitely still tired.

He also was apparently too sick to move, because every time he tried, it felt like someone was trying to bash his face in with a mallet. It was even worse when he tried to get up, because it resulted in him losing whatever had been left of his last meal.

"Yeah, you slept for way too long, buddy," an unknown voice said. "I told them not to give you so much of the sleeping potion, but did they listen to the new guy? Nope, why bother listening to the only other guy who can perform medical procedures?"

"Who's there?" Tommy demanded. He didn't feel like trying to move his head around to see who it was.

"Oh, sorry, right, you don't know me yet," they said. "The name's Seapeekay. I got here alongside Aimsey a few months back, when this was all starting."

"I've never seen you around," Tommy said - or at least, tried to say. He was too worn out to say things, and his voice was just way too gross sounding to talk. That and his voice sounded wrong when he did try to.

"Yeah, I wouldn't recommend talking right now," Seapeekay said. "You're not looking good for the long run, Tommy. The stress nearly killed you once already, not to mention those nasty head injuries you got about a week back."

*Of course, Tommy thought in annoyance. Killed by stress. Not the way I expected to go out.*

"I'm just going to look you over, see if you can stomach anything right now," he explained. Tommy didn't bother trying to respond. He was too exhausted at this point.

Seapeekay started with his inspection, all the while Tommy did his best to stay awake. He'd never expected to think about the fact that instead of going out in a blaze of glory, like he'd always wanted to, he might die on a sickbed. It wasn't something he thought about often.

His mind quietly started to wander into the fog that he'd somewhat gotten used to having around, but he never truly felt used to it. The memories of his lost friends reflected themselves in the glass shards, that he paid nearly no mind to.

**Tommy**, something in his head whispered. He nearly bolted upright right then and there, but his body wouldn't let him. Everything was too tired, too sore.

But he remembered this feeling. Something trying to prod itself into his head, trying to control him, take him away from himself. It was like what the Egg did.

*Get out of my fucking head*, Tommy snapped at it mentally.

***Oh, but where would the fun in that be?*** The thing asked, and Tommy shivered. ***There wouldn't be any fun, now would there, TommyInnit?***

*How do you know my name?* he asked.

***I do believe that finding your name is an easy task. After all, I'm inside most of your systems right now.***

Tommy paused. What the hell did this thing mean, 'inside his systems?' It certainly sounded creepy enough to be the Egg, but no fool would let that thing out unless they had absolutely no idea what it was.

***Hm. Your thought there is close to correct, but, no, not quite. A couple of people are on their way to go talk to it as we speak.***

*How do you know that?* Tommy asked. He couldn't believe that someone was crazy enough to go talk to that thing. Multiple people, in fact.

***Having a couple of puppets scattered around always pays off, you know?*** it said. ***If you only stick to one spot, how do you spread? How do you grow, gain new abilities, learn about what your enemies are doing? Even the most docile looking spies can deliver useful information, even if perhaps while they feed they have a habit of leaving bodies lying around.***

*So it is you,* Tommy said. *You've come back. But why are you turning people into monsters instead of mindless servants like last time? That one was arguable easier to fucking deal with.*

***It's quite funny how you only stick to things you know are out there,*** the voice said. There was something about the way it was talking that sounded off. ***But I suppose I've given you enough hints for now, my new puppet. Your doctor friend out there is asking you something.***

*Wait! Can't you tell me more?* Tommy desperately asked. He called out in his head a few more times, but no response. Whatever it was that had been talking to him was just gone now, but it wasn't gone in the sense that it had completely left. It was still there, hovering just on the edge of his mind, a presence that he couldn't shake or block no matter how hard he tried.

"Tommy? You okay there? I asked you something."

Tommy blinked his eyes quickly, trying to clear his head.

"I asked, do you normally have pointed teeth, or did you sharpen these for fun?"

Seepakay's question froze Tommy in place. He quickly ran his tongue over his teeth, and sure enough, they were sharp and pointed as a blade. Even his tongue no longer felt normal - when he put it on the roof of his mouth, it felt like it was converging into one little spot at the end.

"Dude, are you sure you're not still being affected by the sleeping potion?" Seepakay asked.  
"You're looking a bit drowsy and dazed. If you want I can let you sleep-"

Tommy cut him off by grabbing a stick on the ground. As carefully as he could without moving around too much, he wrote a word on the ground, then drew an arrow pointing to himself.

He looked over at the word in the dirt, and the newcomer, who turned out to be a fox like Fundy, looked as well.

On the ground, written in the dirt like a fresh scar on the world, was the word INFECTED. Seapeekay took one look at the word and looked back at him in shock.

"Are you absolutely certain?" he demanded. Tommy could only nod. Hearing a creepy voice in his head, presumably the Egg's, sharp teeth, weird tongue, feeling sick - it all pointed to him starting to turn into a monster. Without another word, Seapeekay rushed out of the tent.

*But how on earth would I have gotten infected? he wondered. None of them actually hit me, and by then Ranboo and Tubbo had already used their one dose, right?*

**You silly, silly child,** the voice whispered, making its presence known again. **I can't believe you really went with the one dose theory for so long, and led everyone around you to believe it too.**

*What do you mean, you undercooked omelet?* Tommy struggled to insult this thing, considering it was literally just an egg with a consciousness.

**Is that really the best insult you could come up with? Because I tell you, it's not very hard to deflect. And besides, perhaps I should answer your rude question instead of complaining about your terrible ability to insult people.**

Tommy felt a shiver creeping up his spine, and his arms started to feel sore from moving them around so much. Or was he actually moving them at all? He wasn't really sure anymore. And whatever the Egg was about to tell him, he knew he wasn't going to like it.

The voice hissed and whispered around him, like a ghost in his mind. *You're quite a fool, TommyInnit. Your mind is so easily manipulated, so easily molded and scarred. Only a few of my monsters have the ability to infect twice, and if not, they'll simply split it between people. What did you think happened to Wilbur and Techno? Had your theory been fully correct, then only one would have become a monster.*

*I gave Tubbo that extra dose. I wanted him to corrupt you. Quite simply, there are certain people that I want to corrupt, that I want to control.*

*And I'm not even halfway finished with my plague. You know your friends, off to "confront me?" They're next, little boy. By the time they get back, it'll be too late for you, certainly.*

*Welcome, TommyInnit.*

Tommy couldn't say anything as the presence retreated back to the edge of his mind. He couldn't even think of anything to say to this thing's revelations. It scared him, and as people crowded in to look at him, the fog in his head rolled in once more and fell asleep again.

## Chapter End Notes

oh boy oh Noes, i need tO stop with this shiTload of buildup.

but in all seriousness, This is an important cHapter! pEople who have beEn really followinG alonG might catch a couple off oddities in the dialogue, if you're looking closely...

# The Holy Church

## Chapter Summary

The group off to confront the Egg makes their way to Church Prime, but Puffy notices that some things in the church seem a little off

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The Prime Path was eerily deserted, but it made sense to her - everyone was back at the camp set up at Techno's place. Puffy felt uneasy by how empty the Greater DreamSMP's streets were, and the amount of bodies in the Nether was only a clear indicator of why. Even the memory of seeing people that she had lived alongside for years decaying and melting on the netherrack ground, their labored breath ringing in her ears, made her want to run away from this cursed land.

*I can't leave these people to deal with a threat like this on their own. They need help. We all might need it, if we fail here.*

"Puffy, please tell me we're nearly there," Foolish said. "I honestly don't think Eret can go much further without hurting herself."

"I am fucking fine, you idiot," Eret snapped.

"We're almost there, I promise," Puffy called back to them. Foolish let out a sigh of relief, and when Puffy turned to look at them she saw Eret quickly clearing a relieved expression from their face.

Truth be told, Puffy was starting to feel nervous about going to confront the Egg. It was a possibly omniscient creature that could do mind control and possibly turn people into monsters, and here she was about to go down to it and call it's bullshit.

"Puffy, look! There's Church Prime!" Niki called. They all looked towards where Niki was pointing, and indeed, there it was, in all its glory. Admittedly, to someone who had been around when it was made, Church Prime was looking a little worse for wear, but it was still in good condition.

"Lets get inside, quick," Niki said, and she took off running.

"Niki, wait, where are you going?" Puffy yelled. It didn't do any good, because Niki was running fast to the church and clearly was not waiting for anyone else.

*Jesus christ, she's gonna get us all killed doing that,* Puffy thought. Instead of running up to follow her, Puffy dropped back to help Foolish and Eret get to the Church faster.

By the time they'd all crossed into the holy grounds, Niki already had kicked down the doors of the empty church, something that would have surely gotten her into trouble had the priest actually still been there to see it.

The inside of the church was white, but the slowly darkening sky outside made it look more gray and empty. The fact that the church even was empty in the first place was unnerving to her - seeing places where people of all kinds gathered together so devoid of life scared her. The pews were empty, the altar untouched, offerings to the gods resting at its base. And behind the altar, where the priest usually stood, was a large banner, depicting a god with an X-shaped halo. Puffy knew it well - Niki had been commissioned to sew it back in the day, before she'd gotten here.

And behind the banner stood the five armor stands, all of them holding the Egg-resistant suits that they needed.

"There they are!" Niki called from near the entrance. "I was looking in the wrong place, sorry."

"It's fine, Niki, let's just get these on," Foolish said. He helped Eret over to one of the front pews and let them sit down, and Puffy saw the relieved expression on her face.

The three grabbed the suits and put them on, and the bulkiness of the suit surprised Puffy. Then again, it really shouldn't have, considering that she'd helped make them - there was a layer of obsidian between two layers of thick, protective wool.

"Someone help Eret with hers," Puffy ordered. Eret protested as Foolish offered to help her, and Niki walked over in the bulky suit, the helmet underneath her arm.

"Sorry about running off like that," Niki apologized. "I got excited and wanted to see if I could find the suits so we could get a move on faster."

"It's fine, Niki," Puffy said. She looked at the woman next to her, a warm feeling inside her popping up again as she looked at her. "Just remember that those things might have made their way out here and if we leave people alone, we might get just a little bit mauled."

"A 'little bit' mauled?" Niki asked, raising her eyebrow with a joking grin.

"Okay, fine, a lot mauled," Puffy admitted, which earned her a laugh from Niki. It was a sweet sound, one that could make you smile and make your day without even trying.

Puffy looked around the empty church again, her eyes catching on some small things she hadn't noticed before. Like the fact that the carpet had indentations and tears in it that she knew for a fact hadn't been there when she'd last visited. Or the nicks and what looked like a few gashes in the wood of the front pews. Even the windows, which were beautifully stained into pretty images, looked like they were going to fall apart at any second.

“Puffy? Are you okay?” Niki asked. “Do you see something?”

“No, it’s just... nevermind,” Puffy replied. “Just feeling a little jumpy.”

“I think we all are,” Niki whispered. Then she walked away to help Foolish and Eret, who were fighting over whether or not Eret still needed some help.

Puffy sighed and looked at the glass windows again. To anyone just coming in here, it would have literally just looked like a spot of disrepair, but she knew better. Those little dents in the glass weren’t just dents. They were claw marks, and whatever had made them was either too weak to fully break the glass, or...

Whatever it was was feigning the weakness.

She didn’t know which answer was the right one, but based on the gashes in the pews and the tears in the carpet, whatever had been in here had not been too pleased about it.

With a shiver, Puffy turned back to her group, whom Eret had managed to convince that she could manage on her own.

By the time they were ready to leave, night had fallen outside, and the dark glared at them through the open church doors like a challenge to go out. The Prime Path was lit, but that didn’t stop Puffy’s eyes from wandering to the gloomy forests beyond the torchlight.

*There’s nothing out there,* she reassured herself. *If something actually was out hunting us, it would have tried to kill us already. Besides, they’re all back near Snowchester. There aren’t any out here.*

The memory of the citizens from the Greater DreamSMP lying dead in the Nether didn’t help her unease about them being out here. Or the fact that the church looked like it had been slightly torn up.

“Let’s go,” Eret said in a commanding voice. “The sooner we get this over with, the sooner we’ll be able to learn how to turn out friends back to normal, and the faster we do that, the faster we’ll be able to actually get them back from this stupid egg.”

“Hell yeah!” Foolish shouted. “Let’s kick the Egg’s ass!”

Without another word, the four set off down the Prime Path, but despite all her self-reassurances, despite everyone telling her it would be okay, Puffy just couldn’t shake the feeling that something was watching them, like eyes stuck the the back of her neck.

## Chapter End Notes

ayyyyyyyyy more little hints

# Don't Irritate Your Wounds

## Chapter Summary

Tommy, who's been drifting in and out of consciousness for days, hears the voice in his mind once again, but this time, it's not nearly as happy to see him.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The haze of his sickness kept Tommy drifting between conscious and unconscious, and it was a weirdly relieving feeling. When he was just in that middle spot, not quite asleep and yet not quite awake, he couldn't feel anything in his body and couldn't get lost in the glass filled fog in his mind.

In a way, it was like a new type of fog, one that was dark yet comforting enough that he didn't feel like waking up or falling asleep. One where nothing could hurt him anymore.

For the first time in a while, Tommy felt safe. But there was one thing in the dark of the fog that he couldn't shake, one thing that still reminded him that his inner and outer world was still there.

***Hello again, TommyInnit.***

Speak of the devil.

“What do you want now, bitch?” Tommy demanded. He knew no one could hear him outside of the fog - to the people outside it would only sound like he was mumbling. But in the dark fog, he could speak clearly.

***Oh, nothing,*** the voice hissed. There was no face to the voice in the dark, and even despite his near constant conversations with it (unwillingly initiated by the thing, mind you) it never gave anything away about itself or its plans or how the others were doing.

***I just came to check on the transformation of my newest little puppet,*** it whispered. Tommy looked around, but he couldn't see anything. ***And let me say, it's coming along quite nicely. Have you taken a look at it recently?***

“Why would I want to look at the monster you’re turning me into, fuckass?” Tommy snapped. “It’s probably hideous, and besides, by the end of it you’re probably going to rip me in half just to spite me.”

***Tommy, how rude of you,*** it said in a disappointed tone. It was so eerily similar to Dream’s voice during exile that it made Tommy shiver. ***I’m quite proud of what I managed to whip***

*up for you, and yet you repay my gift by insulting it? Perhaps I will simply tear you apart instead of letting you keep my present. But where would the fun in that be? Besides, if I did rip you in half, you wouldn't be able to move anymore, and I don't think you'd like that very much.*

Tommy hesitated. This thing was calling its monsters gifts? Hadn't it seen the devastation they were able to wreak when even just one was around? Was this thing out of its mind?

“Don’t you see that you’ve killed people, you stupid egg?” Tommy yelled. “You’ve broken up two whole families, killed one of our prison wardens, and even though I might not care for them much, Jack and Dream are gone too!”

I admit, I feel a little bad about the \_Beloved family. I came very close to simply passing them up and moving on, but then I found what I wanted. And by then, of course, it was too late for the first one, but hey, they made me realize that your home is full of what I’m after.

“KEEP THEIR NAMES OUT OF YOUR FUCKING SHELL,” Tommy yelled. Was this thing trying to toy with him?

*Oh, wow, how threatening you are, it taunted in a mocking voice. I'm so scared of this little child, who's about to lose themselves to my power and who can't even think about their friends as people, just because someone decided to give them a little gift.*

Without warning, Tommy suddenly felt like he was choking, and the darkness that was once so comforting now blinded him to his attacker.

Out of the blackness, glowing little spots appeared, forming themselves into a grotesque, hole-filled grin. Its voice turned angry and maniacal, and what it said next made Tommy shiver.

*I've nearly had enough of your insolence, child. As a matter of fact, I'm extremely close to simply turning you right here and now. And yet your anger is hilariously misdirected, and it's simply amusing to keep around.*

*Little boy, you're not throwing your rage towards me. All this time, you've falsely assumed that I was something you knew, something you were able to make fun of and laugh off its power.*

*I am not something you can simply laugh at and get away with it. I could turn you before your fifteen days are up and you might not even realize I'm doing it.*

*I am not something to be trifled with, TommyInnit.*

And with that, the thing choking him disappeared and he was left to float alone in the dark once more. He felt a shiver run through him as he slipped into the dark again, letting his panic and worry float away in the fog.

Oh dear lord, Tommy is not having a good time.

But hey, plot armor exists, doesn't it? Surely he'll live through this thanks to the power of being a main character, right?

Right...?

# Liar Turned Truthful

## Chapter Summary

Captain Puffy's group finally makes it to the Egg, but they discover that something else might be in the tunnels with them - and that something else might be pulling the strings

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The sounds of the diamond pick repeatedly hitting the obsidian filled the empty stone corridors. Foolish was down the hall, hammering away at the protective obsidian that kept the egg trapped within its room, while Puffy and everyone else stood guard at the end of it.

“How’s it going, Foolish?” Puffy called. It seemed to be taking longer, but that could just be the fact that she was stressed and tired and everything felt like it was moving slower.

“Nearly through, Puffy, just a few more hits should do it!” Foolish yelled back. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief, and Foolish resumed his mining.

The hall was eerily quiet, and Puffy couldn’t help but keep her hand on the hilt of her sword. The whole way, she’d felt a lurking feeling of being watched, and now that they were in the narrow tunnel systems below the SMP, the likelihood of one of those attacks succeeding was even higher, mainly because they couldn’t run anywhere.

“Puffy, you’re gripping your sword like there’s no tomorrow,” Niki said. The other woman put a hand on her and held it gently. “It’ll be fine. You know how to talk to this thing.”

“It’s not the Egg I’m worried about,” Puffy admitted. “It’s the fact that we’re in a two-by-one tunnel with only two ways to run if shit goes down.”

“Okay, so that is an understandable concern,” Niki admitted. “But think about it this way. Once we’re done there, we won’t need an escape route anyways.” Her fiancee slipped her hand into hers and squeezed it gently. “There isn’t anything to be worried about, I promise you.”

“But what if something goes wrong?” Puffy said. Her worry was starting to overwhelm her, and ideas of what could go wrong started spinning around in her head.

Niki grabbed her other hand and looked her dead in the eyes. Her own brown eyes, deep and gentle yet strong and fierce, kept both their eyes locked in place.

“Puffy, listen to me. There is nothing to worry about, I swear. And if something does happen, I’ll protect you. You’re not dying on my watch.”

"And neither are you," Puffy replied. A smile crossed her lips, and she gave Niki a quick peck on the cheek.

Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed Eret smiling at them, but not really doing anything and instead turning away to look down the corridor once more.

"I've gotten through!" Foolish suddenly yelled, and everyone turned down the long hall to see the golden totem waving them down excitedly. The three walked down the tunnel as fast as they could, even if Eret's walking pace was slower than everyone else's.

"Put the helmets on," Puffy ordered. The helmets were a bit bulky, and the glass that shielded their face was covered in little scratches from their uses during the Eggpire's brief reign.

The four people looked at one another, everyone clad in white wool and underneath, a layer of obsidian. Without another word, Puffy nodded to the group and they followed her into the Egg's containment room.

It was almost the same as they'd left it when they'd blocked it up. Even if perhaps it was even more overgrown than last time. The red vines and plants covered every wall, lava pools littered the floor, and in the corner nearest to where the Egg had been found, Puffy saw that the table was still set for a feast. It made her shiver to remember it.

As Eret entered last, Puffy noticed that the vines were starting to crawl for the exit.

"Foolish, block it off, quickly, don't let it escape!" Puffy shouted. Foolish darted back and cut at the vines with his sword, slicing the crimson vines clean in half. A weird, high-pitch squeal came from the vines, and before they returned to growing at the exit Foolish blocked off the hallway with the dark, glassy block.

"There, they can't get out now," Foolish declared triumphantly. The vines drew back, and Puffy knew that the Egg was not pleased about its escape being blocked off once more.

Puffy walked confidently around the lava pools and through the red plants, brushing aside large vines and small ones. The others followed in her footsteps, not touching anything that she hadn't. There really wasn't much that could hurt them - with the protective suits, nothing truly bad would happen. At the very least, their minds wouldn't become infected.

Before Puffy knew it, they were all standing in front of the large, crimson shell. Little vines grew around the sides of it, creeping upwards towards the ceiling. The glint of the lava made the shell look like it was glowing from the inside out.

"Okay, now remember," Puffy instructed. "Nobody else takes off their helmet. If it gets a hold of any other minds, it could force you to do something that could end up making things way worse than they need to be."

"Understood, Puffy," Foolish said, and the others nodded as well. They stood back as Puffy walked toward the Egg.

Deep breath, Puffy, she thought to herself. You can do this.

She took off her helmet and glared up at the large egg, and despite the fact that she was smaller than it, Puffy stood tall and faced it with pride.

**Captain Puffy**, it hissed. The Egg slithered inside her head once more, poking around like it was something it had left untouched for years and was only coming back to see what had changed.

“Egg,” she said aloud. She wasn’t going to give this awful thing the satisfaction it always got out of speaking through minds. It preferred speaking telepathically, but not today.

*I see you still remember my preferences, and yet you still choose to disregard them. How rude of you, old friend.*

“I am not your ‘old friend,’ you undercooked hatchling.” Puffy kept her voice rough. She couldn’t let it see that it was getting to her. “What in the fucking hell did you do to our friends?”

*Whatever do you mean, my dear?* It asked. *I haven’t seen the light of day in a year. I know nothing of what you speak to me.*

“LIAR!” Puffy shouted. “YOU KNOW WHAT YOU DID!”

*I truly do not comprehend your anger. I know not what atrocity I apparently have committed now, but perhaps your memories could inform me?*

Puffy paused. She knew giving this thing too much information could be dangerous, but what other choice did she have if she wanted it to fix her friends?

“I’ll give you some information, but I will not give you everything, especially not if you don’t cure them.”

*I still haven’t the foggiest idea of what you speak,* the Egg said. *Perhaps your little pieces of information will help me comprehend.*

Puffy sighed and carefully lowered her mental barriers, and the Egg’s presence forced its way into her mind, into her memories, and Puffy forced the memories of the creatures to the surface so that the Egg couldn’t find out anything else.

A few minutes passed as it painfully dug its way through her mind, looking, inspecting.

Learning of the atrocities it had committed.

And to Puffy’s shock, the only feeling that emanated from the Egg was pure confusion. It prodded around, but it didn’t recognize anything. Puffy could sense it.

*I’ve never seen such things before,* it whispered. *And yet you accuse me of this. I know nothing of what this is, and never in my hundreds of years in this place have I seen it before.*

*I can’t save your friends, Puffy. I can’t save them because this wasn’t my doing.*

***I can't turn people into monsters.***

Puffy felt the shock resonate through her. The Egg hadn't done it. They'd come all this way, just to accuse one monster of a crime that another had committed.

They had been wrong.

And now their camp was less defended, and no one knew when the creatures would attack next.

"Please tell me you're lying again," Puffy whispered out loud. "This can't be true. I know we've had some hell of differences but you have to be lying. It has to be your fault."

***I assure you. I've never seen these creatures before today. Your revelation of this is new to me.***

Puffy gasped and dropped to her knees. She couldn't believe it. They had been really wrong. The Egg wasn't the source of their problems. Something else was the source of their problems.

And she didn't know what it was.

***I'm sorry I couldn't be of any help. For today, and for your troubles, I suppose I'll let you go now. What you've been through is not something I'd ever thought I'd see. And it is also not something I choose to get involved in. I bid you farewell.***

And with that, the Egg withdrew from her mind, any malicious intent it had once had toward her gone with the blink of an eye.

Everything went silent. She was so shaken that she didn't even realize the group was asking her questions. The red of the room filled her eyes, and nothing else seemed to matter anymore.

They'd been wrong about the culprit. They'd been so off-track that whatever was really doing this would have had time to infect many, many more people in the time span that Puffy's group had been gone.

Someone shook her shoulder violently, and out of nowhere, someone else forced the protective helmet on her head. It jolted her out of her daze, and she looked up to see Foolish, Eret, and Niki all staring down at her worriedly.

"Are you okay? What did the Egg say? Is it going to turn them back?" Eret's eager questions were spat out at a rapid pace, but for a moment Puffy couldn't say anything back.

"Puffy, is it going to turn them back?" Niki asked.

A moment of silence stretched on through the room. Then Puffy spoke.

"The Egg didn't turn them. Something else is playing behind the scenes. It hadn't even heard of these things before today."

And the silence came again, this time feeling like it stretched on for eternity. The lava pools bubbled and popped, and a weird, eerie whistling sound made the room eerie and unnerving.

Finally, Eret spoke up and broke the silence.

“You realize what that means, right?” Eret said. “We’ve just left our camp alone with at least seven of these monsters on the loose, and by the time we were gone they could have done much more damage. We need to get back as soon as we possibly can and make sure everyone else is okay.”

“Eret’s right,” Foolish said. “If they’ve come back in the time we were gone, then they could all be dead and we wouldn’t know about it. We need to go now.”

Niki didn’t say anything, simply nodded and helped Puffy up off the crimson ground.

No one said anything else as Foolish rushed to the exit to start mining the obsidian he’d placed there. He swung the netherite pickax with all his might, each hit breaking the obsidian faster than normal as he did his best to power through.

Within a few moments, the dark, glassy substance shattered, and as everyone rushed through the door the pieces were scattered about. Before the Egg could do anything to try and escape, Foolish replaced the blocks.

“Let’s go,” Niki said, grabbing Puffy’s hand.

But as they turned down the hallway that led back to the home Nether portal, they stopped dead in their tracks.

There was something down at the end of the hallway. Whatever it was was crouching down , its head scraping on the ceiling. Or were those... horns?

It started moving down the hall, slowly and methodically checking every room with careful precision, its head swinging left to right in a way that felt too casual, too easy. Something was wrong with it.

“What the fuck is that?” Foolish whispered.

“I don’t know,” Niki whispered back. “I think it might be one of those creatures.”

“All the way out here? How would it have gotten out here so fast?”

“The Nether portals,” Puffy whispered. “They’ve started traveling over the Nether highways we made there. But why would this thing be underground?”

As they whispered, Puffy watched the new creature closely. It was starting to get closer, and as it did, the amount of rooms branching off from their corridor were starting to run low. Soon it would only be coming at them, and if they weren’t gone the other way by then, they would certainly become monster food.

"This upcoming room is a whole hallway," Eret whispered. "If it's trying to find something, then it'll need to check down the whole hallway."

"But doesn't that one end in a dead end?" Niki whispered back.

"It does, and it doesn't take very long to end. If it goes down there, we need to run as soon as we're out of its field of vision."

"Everyone, take off your armor, your boots, anything that could make noise and alert this thing," Puffy whispered quickly. "If we're going to run, we need to make sure it can't hear us before it gets back to this hall. And we need to be out of here by then so it can't see us either, so Eret, I'm sorry, but you're going to have to run."

They all nodded, and as the creature pulled its head out from the most recent room, they all started taking off their boots and armor. Puffy took off her potion belt and sword sheath, and removed her earrings as well. Anything that could make noise was dangerous.

"Are we ready?" Niki asked in a low voice. The creature was getting close to the hallway that Eret had spoken of. It actually seemed a little bigger than Puffy had first thought, but they couldn't see it very well - the torches down here had dimmed years ago, and rarely got replaced anyways.

*Focus, Puffy, she thought. Get a hold of yourself. You've got people to go help.*

She took a shallow, wavering breath as the creature turned its head down the long hallway, and they waited silently. For a moment, everything was frozen in the balance of whether or not this thing would actually go down the tunnel, and her heartbeat was so loud in her ears that she was certain the monster heard it.

And then the monster turned down the corridor, and the group kept waiting for it to fully go in.

"Run," Eret commanded the second it was out of sight. They all turned and started running as fast as they could down the hallway, their bare feet making almost no sound on the stony floor. Foolish ran ahead to check for any more of them, while Niki helped Eret run and Puffy stayed at the back to make sure it hadn't emerged from the tunnel.

For some reason, the corridor they were running down seemed longer, and Puffy felt like she was trapped in a nightmare - the nightmares where you couldn't run nearly as fast as you wanted to escape something, and everything around you was so much farther away than it needed to be.

Thankfully, they managed to turn the corner at the end of the hallway before it returned, and Puffy let out a breath she hadn't known she'd been holding.

"We need to keep going, come on," Foolish whispered. They kept to their silent running, making sure that no stray stones or pebbles were kicked that could make a noise. The dim light from the dying torches made her uneasy, like whatever was back there could be right behind her and she wouldn't know. Hell, she even turned around once or twice to check, but

nothing was there. And to her, that was more scary, because if it wasn't behind them, then where was it?

Minutes passed of them walking in the dark, with no indication that they were going anywhere and no light above them to tell where they might be or how long they'd been down there. And all the while, the absence of the creature made Puffy uneasy to the point where she was checking over her shoulder every thirty seconds or so.

"Look! A way out!" Foolish said after a while of running. And indeed, there was sunlight filtering into the tunnel through a break in the ground above.

Puffy had never felt so relieved to see sunlight in her life.

"We're almost there, come one!" Eret whispered. She was doing her best to keep her regal appearance, but Puffy could see the excitement in her steps and in her eyes.

They were almost to the hole in the rocks when a weird, eerie whispering started up. Puffy whipped around trying to locate the noise. It sounded like wind blowing down the tunnel behind them, but that couldn't be possible - any wind going through here stopped dead at the intersections.

Puffy perked her ears, trying to figure out the noise. It sounded like wind, but at the same time it sounded like there were... voices... in the wind, and it spooked her.

Out of nowhere, a long, loud screech echoed down the hallway. It went on for a quite a while, and Puffy turned to her friends.

"Can anyone else hear the weird screaming back there?" she asked softly. Without saying anything, they nodded.

"I think we need to get out of here, and fast," Niki said. She started helping Foolish dig through the roof, making a small pile of dirt behind them that the others could climb.

As the sounds of dirt being dug filled her ears, Puffy prayed to every god out there that they would be able to get back to their friends in time.

## Chapter End Notes

well damn, that whole side quest for nothing, they are in trouble now :)

# A Desperate Chase

## Chapter Summary

Puffy and the gang are nearly back, but on their way to the camp they encounter the new monster... and an old friend.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Niki's group was almost back at the community portal when something went wrong.

She should have expected that something was going to happen - it had been too quiet, too peaceful out in the open for too long. She should have known that the monsters would be out here, roaming around in the background. The second they'd seen that thing in the tunnels should have been the red flag that clued them in.

But nope, instead they'd all chosen to look for that silver lining in their situation, so much so that Niki hadn't even fully come to grasp the fact that the Egg wasn't truly the cause of this whole mess.

Puffy heard something first - a bush snapping in the nearby forest.

"What was that?" she said aloud. Everyone else turned to her, faces twisted in concern. Niki was concerned as well, and there was an ominous aura floating around, slowly creeping up her spine like a freezing claw.

"Puffy, please, you're being paranoid." Eret's dismissiveness nearly broke the building tension among them, but it didn't.

"I swear I heard something, Eret," Puffy protested.

"It was a branch breaking, we'll be fine." The king's deep voice was commanding as ever, but Niki knew better. She could hear the unease growing in her voice, no matter how she tried to hide it.

"You can never be too sure," Niki said. "I'll go check it out. If it's nothing, then we'll just go."

"No, I think Puffy should check it out," Eret said. "If she's so convinced that she heard something, then she should confirm something's there, shouldn't she?"

No, that's a horrible idea, Niki reasoned. But of course she didn't say anything as Puffy walked over to the forest and peered into the bushes.

The green leaves rustled loudly as her fiancee pushed them aside to look in the forest, growing ever brighter as the sun climbed higher and higher in the sky, and for a few moments, the world stood still. The bluebirds singing in the trees slowly quieted, the breeze running over the hills came to a standstill, the sounds of the portal behind her ceased, and her own heartbeat slowed in those moments.

*Gods, please let there be nothing there, she prayed. Niki didn't want to encounter one of the things here, and if it was over by Puffy that meant that Eret's idea could have just gotten her killed.*

"All clear!" Puffy called. Everyone let out a small sigh of relief, and the ram hybrid made her way back over to the portal with the rest of them. "I guess Eret was right."

Foolish looked so relieved that it had been a false alarm, and she realized that Puffy was his adoptive mother - he was just as scared for her as she was.

Eret and Foolish went through the Nether portal first, to get the injured king through to the other side before something could actually come after them. The small whoosh that came from their crossing rippled the portal behind, leaving the already swirling purple gate even more wavy than before.

"Are you ready to tell the others that we failed?" Niki asked. She looked over the community area of their home wistfully, wishing that she could stay a little longer in the sunlight before disappearing into the Nether.

"Not really," Puffy admitted. "I'm pretty sure they won't be happy that we didn't immediately find a solution to the problem. Then again, in this place, there never really is a solution, is there?"

"You're right," Niki said. "In these lands, you're always being betrayed and fighting against people you care about. There is never an easy way out of a problem other than war."

"Then I suppose we'll have to go to war with these things," Puffy declared. She stood tall, and her brown and white hair waved in the gentle wind. The sunlight gleamed down on the sheath of her sword, glinting at Niki like an invitation to fight.

"But they were our friends once," Niki whispered. "How can I fight people that I can almost trust now?"

*How can I fight against the Syndicate? The only people who never betrayed me? Against Jack and Wilbur, who I was just learning to trust again?*

*Won't I be a traitor to them if I fight them?*

"They aren't our friends anymore, Niki," Puffy whispered, putting a strong hand on her shoulder. "They're changed into something worse, and even if we'd never known who they were, we'd still have no choice but to fight them. They're killing us all, and if we don't do anything about it, we'll all be dead by the next solstice."

*She's right, you know, her mind whispered. If you don't fight them, you'll die.*

Puffy was right. So was the little voice in her head that seemed to constantly annoy her. If she didn't fight them, who else would?

"Let's go in," Niki said. "The others are probably waiting for us on the other side."

"So are all those dead bodies we had to walk past the first time," Puffy muttered. They both turned away from the sight that was the community zone and looked toward the portal.

But as they did, Niki felt like something was severely wrong. Something was here, where it shouldn't be, and if Puffy and Niki didn't get into the portal right now they were screwed.

"Puffy, come on, we need to get into the Nether quickly—"

A scraping sound on the blackstone made both of them freeze in place. Niki's hand was on the portal frame, and she gripped the glassy stone tighter. She yelped as it cut her hand, and she took it off the frame immediately.

"You okay?" Puffy whispered, taking her hand in hers to examine the cut. The gentle, eerie scratching continued, sending shivers through her whole body again. The scratching was so soft that had Niki not been subconsciously listening for things she never would have heard it. It was like one of those small things you never noticed until it was right next to you.

And the quiet scratching slowly got louder, and even though Puffy was trying to keep her attention on her, Niki turned her head carefully back to where they'd just come from.

And as it turned out, Puffy had been right. She had heard something in the forest.

There was a creature slowly making its way up the path towards them. Niki realized in horror that it was the exact same one that had been coming at them in the tunnels below. The shape of the horns - no, the antlers- were the same, and it was still coming toward them with that same, eerie head swinging motion as before, except it was consistent now, its head swinging back and forth like a hypnotizing pendulum.

Its face was covered by a deer's skull, cracked and old, with a pair of fangs near the front of the mouth. Its eyes were sunken in, somewhat like the creature Tubbo had turned into, but these were clearly still human eyes, seeing and flicking around in the sockets, looking for anything that moved among the bushes nearby. Niki couldn't see its lower jaw, but she had a sneaking suspicion that it didn't have one.

Its body was covered by a brown sweater, and for that she was glad. Its clawed hands were long and thin, covered in sparse little ridges that lined the back of them. The claw-tips were gleaming and dripping with little, ruby droplets of blood, and as she looked again, she could see that the skull's fangs were dripping with it too. Its legs were long, and the feet taloned. There was something else on the creature's claws. It looked like there were little bits of ripped and bloody skin.

It inched closer with every step it took, and every time its head swung Niki got the distinct feeling that it could see them, even when its head was facing away from them.

"Puffy, what do we do?" Niki whispered. "Do we fight it? Or do we just get in the portal and go?"

Puffy stayed silent, and she watched the creature, and for a moment everything hung in the balance between fighting this thing and getting back to camp sooner.

"Let's get the fuck out of here," Puffy whispered. Niki nodded, and before the creature was close enough to notice, the pair vanished into the Nether.

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Niki couldn't get the image of the new creature out of her head. It seemed so familiar, and the low, oozing heat of the lava around her was not helping her pin down who it was.

Or rather, who they used to be, she thought uneasily. The fact that there was another one that they hadn't even known was there scared her. How long had the creatures been wandering further than Snowchester without their knowledge of it?

Long enough that they were able to make more of them, the little voice in her head sang eerily.

The group carefully wandered through the stretching Nether highways, now much warier of what may be lurking nearby. Not a word was spoken among them. Pouring lava nearby glowed on their faces, bubbles popping gently. The random fires that always scattered the netherrack ground crackled and sparked, swaying as though there were a breeze blowing through the stifling heat. Niki looked on as small, blue nylium plants slowly crept across the barren ground, digging into the burning rocks and settling themselves there contentedly.

The amplified odor of rotting corpses hit her nose before she saw the half-melted, still living things. Eerie, raspy breathing came from their exposed lungs, whispering words that never would be heard by another living soul.

Niki winced and looked away from a particularly torn up body that twitched as they passed. These poor people should be with Lady Death by now, not suffering here for Prime knew how long. Just thinking about how long they could have been down here without anyone knowing made a guilt surge in her stomach. Their camp was supposed to be a place where they found a way to fix the problem before it spread, but clearly they weren't fast enough.

Something shone out of the corner of Niki's eye - it could have been more lava, or a fire, or a shroomlight cluster. Hell, maybe it was quartz or gold. But there was something about it that made her look over. Whatever it was, it wasn't giving her a good feeling.

Niki looked over to see at least thirty of the weird, silvery snakes sitting calmly in place. Even worse, they were all pointing their heads - or whatever their heads were - directly at the group, turning in perfect unison to watch them pass.

"Holy shit!" Niki screamed, stumbling backwards into Puffy.

"Niki, what's got you so spooked?" Foolish demanded. He looked over to where she was staring and swore as the snakes all turned their attention to him. As everyone turned their gazes to the snakes, the group of them turned and looked at each person in turn. It was eerie, as though they all were watching... calculating... something.

"Why are they watching us?" Eret whispered.

"What are they watching us with?" Foolish asked. "They don't look like they have any eyes, or any-"

Niki stopped him mid-sentence. "Please do not continue your analysis, I do not want to know where it ends."

The whirring sound that had been fading in and out of Niki's ears returned louder than before, clicks and cranking being added into the mixture of noise that was humming through the hot, still air.

In the same, eerie unison as before, the snakes began to slither toward one another, and they began crawling up the sides of one another

They all took a step back. This isn't normal snake behavior, Niki thought as the blood drained from her face. We - I - should have noticed that there was something wrong with these things. Or maybe they knew the whole time and didn't want to tell me in case it freaked me out or didn't believe it.

The things kept slithering up and around each other, forming the beginnings of some kind of body and arms. A few snakes slithered off into a hole nearby as their brethren continued to create whatever it was making.

"Guys, we need to run now, before that thing is fully formed." Foolish's voice cleared through the constant chimes of the whirring noises.

Without another word, the four started moving as fast as they could. Foolish took off along with Puffy, leaving Niki behind with Eret.

"I don't need help, I swear-" the king's protests were cut off as Niki put an arm around her.

"You're not fine, you've been walking on an injured leg and with an cut in your chest for four days, you will take my help whether you fucking like it or not."

They started to run - or rather, Niki started to drag Eret along behind her, who followed in pursuit in a hobble. The netherrack below their feet crunched and the small plants were crushed as they moved away from the growing mass of whirring snakes.

A loud, high-pitched screech echoed through the massive cave, rolling through the air and making lava pooling down from above spit into the pathway that they were running down. Niki yelped as a burning drop of magma landed on the back of her neck, scorching the skin

badly enough that by the time she had managed to painfully scrape her hand across it and get it off, she couldn't feel the place where it had burnt her.

"Keep going, we can't let this thing catch us!" Eret yelled as she ducked her head down to avoid a splash of lava flying next to her. The screeching slowed as rumbling made its way through the netherrack stones beneath them, nearly unbalancing her and taking them both down.

"NIKI! ERET! YOU'RE ALMOST THERE, COME ON!" Foolish's yell was faint amongst the thundering sounds of the thing behind them. Niki glanced up ahead at their beckoning hands, the swirling storm of the Nether portal behind them.

They were so close. Only a few more feet, a few more seconds...

The roaring sound caught up and before anyone could do anything, Niki and Eret were snatched up by large, clawed, silvery hands. They screamed, Niki from fear, Eret from pain as the clawed hand gripped her injured chest tightly.

"SHIT!" she screamed, but before she could call for the others the clawed hands dropped her slightly to close around her neck. She couldn't see her attacker's face, but judging by how bloody the silver claws were, this was another one of the creatures.

"PUT THEM DOWN!" Foolish yelled, drawing his blade swiftly from its sheath. Puffy pulled her ax from behind her back, brandishing it violently toward the creature.

"SHOW YOUR FACE, YOU SILVER DEMON!" Puffy's rage-filled cry echoed through the Nether, that of a soldier's as they raced into battle.

A sick, crunching sound emanated from the creature as whatever it was turned its head, or did whatever it was doing - Niki couldn't tell, and as the thing kept a tight grip around her neck, and her breathing became shallower.

Puffy opened her mouth to yell at the thing again, presumably to tell it to turn it head around again, when her face paled. Foolish's normally shiny golden color, a beacon in this red hellscape, dimmed down to a lusterless pale yellow. Both of their faces went from angry to shocked, from shocked to horrified.

One word escaped from Puffy and Foolish's mouths at once.

"JACK?"

The creature holding Niki and Eret screeched loud and long, and without warning dropped Niki and Eret from its claws. Eret managed to roll when she landed, but Niki unfortunately landed straight down on one of her legs, snapping it painfully as she landed with a scream.

Puffy tried to rush over, but a sudden, painful weight landed on her throat as it pinned her face only inches away from the burning netherrack.

Niki couldn't see anything, but after hearing Jack's name, any will to move drained out faster than a creeper igniting.

*Do they really mean that? Niki wondered in unease. Jack never showed up at the camp, and whenever he was mentioned among the people who brought us there it was always just uncomfortable silence or saying he went somewhere else when he was told about it. Did they lie to us about it?*

Niki wriggled her arms underneath her and tried to get up, but the weight on her neck kept her pinned. Had it been the shoulders or around the waist, she could have pushed herself up, but one the neck... it could be broken before she could even get herself halfway up.

“Jack? But we thought you left after the monsters came!” Foolish called.

“**LIES!**” the creature shrieked. It was Jack’s voice, but mangled and torn so horrible that it didn’t sound like him anymore. “**LIARS! THE FUCKING TRAITOR LEFT ME TO DIE!**” Its wails pierced Niki’s eardrums, making the word traitor echo through Niki’s mind.

“What do you mean, a traitor left me to die?” Puffy asked.

“**You know him all too well - you all do, he is the cause of all our problems, he left me to die alone in the snow to try and save an old man!**” Its loud screaming had lowered in volume down to normal speaking volume, but it was putting more weight on Niki and Eret’s necks. The musty, death-filled air wasn’t coming to Niki anymore, and she could feel her throat closing up.

“Stop, stop pushing on their necks!” Foolish yelled.

“You’re going to kill them!” Puffy snapped.

The Jack-creature roared, but to everyone’s surprise, it let Niki and Eret go entirely. Puffy and Foolish rushed over and helped their companions up.

Niki looked over from trying to stand with Puffy’s help, curious to see Jack’s face after the transformation. She knew it would be horribly grotesque, and she knew it would probably be an image that was burnt into her brain forever. But she needed to know.

*Yep, that’s going into the ‘trauma images’ part of my brain,* Niki thought as she gasped in shock.

The creature was tall, and made entirely of the silvery snakes that had followed them throughout their Nether journey. The snakes were bloody, presumably from being inside the corpses of the citizens, but the blood was baked on and dry from the heat of the world around them. Its claws were long, but they actually looked quite brittle. It had no legs, only a long, constantly moving tail of reddish-silver. Surrounding it were rods that were attached to certain snakes on its back, painted to look like blaze rods. The paint itself was peeling and cracked, but with the amount of time that could be skipped in the Nether, she was surprised it was peeling at all.

Jack’s face had to be the worst part of this thing. Sure, the talon-sharp claws and blood-covered body were intimidating, but his face made Niki feel like she was about to throw up.

His face was twisted into a horrific, demonic grin, teeth sharp and bloody and shoving their way through his gums. The grin itself looked like it was sewn impossibly wide, breaking the skin on the sides of the mouth to the point where Niki could see into the throat between stitches. His signature blue and red glasses were sitting on his face, as usual, but hanging like ominous pendulums below the rims of the glasses were his eyes. They could still move and see, and as Niki made eye contact she felt like the hanging eyeballs were judging her for every misdeed she had ever committed in her life.

She felt her eyes tear up, and immediately dry up in the heat. How could this be her old friend? What had this monster, puppeting and playing behind the scenes, done to her friends in general?

*How twisted do you have to be to do this to people? Niki wondered. What kinds of evil would you need to be to torture and kill thousands of innocent people, and turn some into monsters? Who could have done this?*

**“You need to leave,”** the twisted thing said. **“Get out of here, before it forces me to turn one of you. I don’t want to be here, it’s wrong, it hurts, PLEASE, JUST LEAVE!”** Jack’s desperate pleading turned to pained screams as something flickered in his dim, lightless eyes.

“Guys, I think we should listen to him,” Eret said. “That’s not the person turning them. That’s Jack talking. Let’s go back to camp and make sure everyone is okay.”

“We can’t just leave him like this!” Niki protested. Anger suddenly rose inside her. “Can’t you guys see that he’s still in there? That’s proof enough for me that we can get him back, that we can save the others!”

“Have you lost your fucking *mind*, Niki?” Foolish suddenly shouted. “Sure, that might be Jack talking, but how do we know he’s not going to turn and murder us all the second we step out of that portal?”

**“Listen to Foolish, get out, please, I don’t want to hurt you!”** Jack’s voice was layered and eerie, just like the other creature’s voices. This voice seemed to be lacking one major voice in the harmony, but Niki could hear his pleas starting to gain it. **“It’ll be back soon, just please go. It hurts, I DON’T WANT TO HURT THEM!”**

Without a word, Puffy forced Niki toward the portal. Foolish and Eret followed behind, about before they went through, Niki looked back into the hanging eyes of her friend one last time.

“Jack, listen, I promise I’ll find a way to reverse this! I’ll get rid of your pain, I promise!”

The swirling sounds of the portal filled her ears, and the traveling groups finally returned to Techno and Phil’s cabin camp.

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Jack smiled softly to himself in his mind, glad that his friends had taken his warning to leave seriously. Speaking through the monster was extremely painful, and every time he had it nearly tore him apart from the inside out to get them away.

He hadn't intended to attack Niki and Eret in such a way - that had been the thing in the shadows of his mind, not him. He never would have done that.

***YOU FOOL!*** The thing roared as it returned. ***I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO INFECT THEM!***

"Well, this is my new body, as you've so' generously' given me," Jack snapped. "I figured, 'hey, my body, my choice, right?'"

*You couldn't have at least infected one of them?* it snarled from the dark. Jack smirked - he enjoyed pissing this thing off, mainly because it was so fucking worth it to hear it angry instead of the manipulative, playful tone it always seemed to use.

"Well, you see, just because I threw myself into your little spider web of minions, that doesn't mean I don't still care about the people who actually gave a shit."

*Why, I should force you into the lava right-* It stopped mid sentence, leaving an uneasy quiet.

*Well, well, well,* it whispered. *You are so protective of your little friends, so happy to let them get away from me. But it turns out, you did infect one of them, even if you didn't mean it. I can feel a new branch growing as we speak.*

"You're lying," Jack said, growing shock filling his mind.

*Oh, but why would I lie?* It asked in a guilty tone. *To see you panic? To see you regret your actions, even if they weren't your own? My friend, even if that was my most enticing option, why not simply tell the truth? After all, once they're gone, you'll never be able to apologize to them. You'll never get your apologies, the ones you think you deserve. You don't.*

"No, stop it, shut up!" Jack screamed. This was the worst part of being stuck in his own head - he was trapped with this thing, and it knew everything about him. It used it against him. It tore him apart every day.

"I don't want to hear it anymore, please, just go away!" he yelled. He could feel the monster's body growling as pain struck through its many moving parts, and he cried out as the thing in the shadows laughed at his begging, taunting him further, until Jack was thrown back into the web of thoughts that hurt him. He closed his eyes, and let the monstrous form that he had become take hold once more.

## Chapter End Notes

ayyyyyyy more content

Also i admit to calling myself out this chapter for the whole 'twisted' shit this is pretty dark lol

# A Helping Hand and a Lost Cause

## Chapter Summary

Back in the camp, people are working on reinforcing the place, with Aimsey leading the charge on reinforcements. Meanwhile Puffy and Niki have just been informed that someone infected has been kept in camp, and are taken to see who it is.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Aimsey was helping Slimecicle and Quackity with fence reinforcements when Karl came running up to them, dragging a very tired George behind him.

“George, get off your ass and do something helpful,” Karl said, placing a hammer and some nails in his hands. “Quackity, you need to come see this.”

Quackity dropped his building tools and looked over at Aimsey. “Do you think you can handle finishing up the reinforcements?” Quackity asked.

“Consider them handled!” he replied. With a nod, Quackity and Slimecicle took off to follow Karl, leaving Aimsey to finish reinforcing the fences with George.

The usual quiet bustle of camp was even quieter today, like the universe was pausing everyone to make something happen. The cold wind blew through the trees, taking snowflakes with them and dropping them on the tools Aimsey was using and on his hands.

George glared at the hammer and nails in his hands, and without a word, picked up a plank and violently hammered it into place. Aimsey scooted away a little bit - this guy was clearly pissed, and if he chose to throw the hammer he was not about to be target practice.

*Maybe he's just grumpy because someone woke him up,* Aimsey thought. It was reasonable to be grumpy if someone woke you up early.

George hammered the nails into the plank, and Aimsey did his side of the smooth board, much less angrily. The breeze blew through again, and more snowflakes landed on his hands as he worked. He quietly started humming a tune, not loud enough to draw attention, but enough so that he could hear it over the wind.

“Have you ever just felt... really, really pissed off?” George suddenly asked. Aimsey wasn’t sure if he was talking to him or to himself, but for now he would see if he asked him.

“I’m talking to you, you know,” George said, looking over at Aimsey now. His dark glasses covered his eyes, but Aimsey could feel his gaze lingering.

"Oh, sorry," he said. "I wasn't sure if you were talking to yourself or talking to me, so I wasn't saying anything." He paused for a moment. "Could you repeat the question? I didn't hear it."

George sighed and turned his glare to the fence, where he had started hammering in a new board. "Have you ever just been really pissed off for what feels like no reason?"

"Yeah, one time." Aimsey had only been mad like that once, but it had been before he'd come here. George didn't need to know that. "Why do you ask?"

"I've been feeling that way for a while now," he explained. "I'm not exactly sure why, but ever since we got here and learned the news I've just felt... mad. Especially towards Dream, but I'm not really sure why - he's one of them, after all."

"Well, he was also the server's biggest asshole, and he was the one who bought the potion, so I guess it's reasonable you're pissed with him." Aimsey put a few nails in his mouth and kept his eyes trained on where he was working.

"You didn't know him before he was an asshole on this scale," George said. "Before this he was... actually nice to be around. He wasn't mean, or controlling, or anything like how he was when this happened."

"Certainly sounds like a nicer guy to be around."

"He was. I guess I'm just missing an old friend."

They stayed quiet after that, neither speaking unless it was to ask for a tool or an extra plank. The winds hummed with a chill that made Aimsey shiver as he looked into the forest beyond the fence.

Somewhere out there were people who needed saving.

And yet they still couldn't do anything about it. Nobody knew how to stop this yet. Aimsey prayed to every god out there that just maybe, the group coming back from whatever the Egg was had an answer - or had solved the problem entirely.

"There, last plank," George said out of the blue. Aimsey looked over to see that the reinforcements were indeed finished, and finished in a much finer way than he would have expected. It actually looked pretty good, for someone who seemed like they were constantly sleep deprived.

"I guess we could go join Quackity with whatever's happening over there," Aimsey said. George yawned, and he added, "Or you could go back to bed. Seven in the morning isn't always the time for everyone."

Gratefully, George walked away towards the tents, and Aimsey took off in the direction where the other group had gone earlier.

Hopefully they were still there.

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Niki was glaring around the camp as Quackity and Karl approached. Foolish and Eret had headed back to the medical area, to get her injuries checked. Niki insisted on staying to deliver the news that they had no solution, despite apparently having a third-degree burn on the back of her neck from what Eret told her on the way back.

"Did you fry that stupid egg?" Quackity asked, his undamaged eye lit up with hope. Karl and Slimecicle stood behind him, their eyes shining as well.

Puffy was standing ahead of her, hands balled into fists. She didn't say anything and looked away from the desperate people.

Niki saw as the excitement in their eyes slowly began to drain away into despair. "Puffy, what happened? Did you fix things?"

A moment of silence rang through the air, and the tension was swift and uneasy in the air.

"The Egg wasn't the one who did this. We don't know who it is," Puffy said quietly.

Another moment passed.

"WHAT?" Quackity shouted. "WHAT DO YOU MEAN, IT WASN'T THE EGG?"

"I mean what I said!" Puffy snapped back. "The Egg isn't at fault this time! There's something else going on -"

"How do we know it's not messing with you?" Karl said. "You were in that weird cult once, weren't you?"

"I left of my own accord, asshole!" Puffy yelled, her normally calm-ish voice turning to an angry shout. "I knew what I was doing, and I had one of the resistance's old suits on. I knew it was telling the truth, Quackity!"

"And how do we know we can trust that?" Karl snapped.

Quackity's eyes lit up with an idea, and Niki had a feeling that he had an idea that wasn't going to be particularly safe for anyone.

"Karl, maybe we can verify if Puffy's telling the truth," Quackity said. He turned to Niki and Puffy. "We have someone in camp who's been infected, and we could easily ask them."

Niki's blood went cold. "You're keeping someone who's been infected in the camp? How long have they been here?"

"Since the fight happened about two weeks back."

Quackity led Niki, Puffy, Karl and a very nervous Slimecicle to the medical tents. People walked past, but everything was quiet and nobody was really speaking. The chilly breeze blew the tent covers around, and snowflakes fell from the sky and landed gently on Niki's

hands. The burn on her neck went completely numb as the chill of the day cooled it off, and for once Niki was super grateful that Techno and Phil lived in this frozen forest. Any other day she would be cursing under her breath over how cold it was here.

"I'd recommend staying a bit quieter, going in here," Quackity said as they approached one tent. "They've kind of become sensitive to noise."

*For fucks sake, couldn't he just tell us who was infected?* It was really starting to get on Niki's nerves, how vague the half-blind Avian was being about it. Hell, if it was another person she knew, she was going to lose her shit. She would definitely start a fight, need to be quiet or no need to be quiet.

Quackity carefully opened the flap of the tent and stuck his head in. Niki heard a soft exchange of words between whoever else was in the tent - presumably the doctor - and he looked back at them.

"Remember, stay quiet," he whispered as they went in.

The silence hung in the air as they went inside, and it turned out that the tents were quite roomy. It managed to fit all five people, to her surprise. The red of the rent blew in the breeze, making it brush lightly against the burn on Niki's neck. She was starting to feel it in the spots around the burn, but it was still numb.

She looked at Puffy, unease filling her. She wasn't quite sure she wanted to see this person - who knew what kind of state they would be in, and she never liked seeing people on their deathbeds. The wars had certainly awoken that fear inside her.

She watched as Puffy's eyes first went wide, then slowly began to tear up.

Niki couldn't handle whatever suspense was in the air, and finally turned her eyes toward the bed where the infected person lay.

## Chapter End Notes

Holy **SHIT**, 30 chapters of this??? That is astounding to me. I have never written something this long and had it be something i enjoy writing consistently, and I hope you guys like it too. Don't worry, by the way, we're halfway there.

Oh god that means even more chapters-

# Splitting, Snapping, Silence

## Chapter Summary

Tommy's hazy fever has only gotten worse, but there's no turning back now.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The sounds around him were hazy, yet they were sharp and piercing and painfully needled his brain. It wasn't pleasant, and he wished he could just cover his ears forever and sit in the quiet.

Tommy heard whispering, but he couldn't process any words. They were all jumbled up and garbled. Words were funny. Strange letters to be made into cohesive sentences, and that didn't make any sense to his sick brain.

***You're nearly ready, the voice whispered. You'll make a wonderful addition to my collection of playthings, won't you?***

Tommy wasn't sure what it meant by playthings. One minute it was saying that it was giving the infected people a gift, the next it was calling them puppets. He couldn't make any sense of it, couldn't find the logic in their speech. It was like it was trying to throw him off track on purpose.

***Why would I do that? It questioned. To mess with you? Oh, absolutely.*** It said the last word in a low hiss. Whatever face was behind the voice was clearly smiling, and it reminded Tommy of Dream's terrible grin. The smiley face burned through his hazy mind, snapping him out of his sickness long enough to realize that he was screwed.

***I found it, it whispered maliciously. Welcome to my web, TommyInnit.***

And out of literally nowhere, Tommy woke up. He still felt horribly feverish - everything was hazy and he couldn't focus his eyes on any one thing - but he felt something else too. It wasn't an emotion, like how he'd been feeling for the past two weeks. This was something physical.

He looked over to the side to see multiple people standing at his bedside, the doctor included. He wasn't sure who they were, but one looked distinctly not-human. They were green and oddly shiny.

"Tommy? Are you feeling okay?" The question came through to him distorted, but also weirdly muffled. Like he was losing his ability to hear. Where every sound had been crystal clear hours earlier, it was now like someone was stuffing feathers into his ears.

The weird physical feeling was starting to be painful. Tommy gritted his teeth as he felt something in his legs begin to shift and change in a way it wasn't supposed to. His jaw was fucking sore as well, and it felt like something was trying to jam through his gums.

The voices around him went quieter, and before long, he couldn't hear them anymore. He was in pure silence. There was just nothing.

The pain in his legs was getting ever worse. He groaned, but Tommy only knew that because he could feel it in his throat. Before long, he could taste blood in his mouth - his teeth, which had been sharpening since the day he woke up here - were tearing into his lips, and they grew painfully from his gums, bigger and longer than a dagger.

The pain in his legs was at its peak, and he felt himself scream as he watched and felt his legs start to split in half. A thin, delicate line ran its way down them, carving his legs in two with an easygoing precision.

Tommy's eyes widened as he watched muscles and sinew tear perfectly in half, and he screamed again. It felt like his screams were getting louder - this one had hurt his throat. A heavy force seemed to snap his bones in half, but it didn't just break his bones clean in half; it started snapping them and breaking any pieces that could have been left into disgusting white pulp. He watched as the big nerves in his legs were torn up and ripped apart like the finest of fine threads.

Not only were his legs splitting in half again, this time sideways, but now his arms were starting to hurt too. They were burning - not literally, thank Prime - but it felt like there were things trying to poke out from underneath his skin.

He couldn't help lashing out with his arms, but in the process, he felt something wooden bump against it, and before he knew what was happening, soft fabric came down to gently rest on his bleeding body. Even just that hurt like all hell.

His mind was spinning, the glass and fog swirling together in a sharp, blinding tornado that he was swept into before he could regain control of himself.

It was all panic, all terror, he didn't know what was happening and there was no one with him. He was alone in this storm, and no one could find him even if he tried to find them. It was all madness, and everything was dark and it all hurt so much.

Tommy couldn't handle it - it felt like he was being forced into a box, or being tied up in an ever-tightening rope. It was constricting, only adding to his fear.

*I don't want to die, someone please just get me out of here, it hurts!* His thoughts came through, but he could barely think them before they were swept away into the hurricane.

It was all chaos, and he could feel tears running down his face. Tommy couldn't think anymore.

Then the thing slowly started to creep into his head again, and it began dragging his spiraling mind into a gentle little pile, calming it down and slowing his thoughts enough for him to

think. Tommy wanted to be grateful to it for putting him out of his misery, but he couldn't be grateful to something that had tormented him for days on end with pain and cruel words.

*I was supposed to help the others, he thought. I was supposed to help them. I was supposed to keep the others safe, and I couldn't protect Michael. I failed them all.*

**Yes, you did fail them.** The hissing voice was filled with cruel glee.

Before Tommy was yanked into the dark web of the thing, he opened his eyes to see only red around him. The rippling red fabric was the only thing he could see and he thought that this was where he would be left.

Then someone lifted the tent. He looked up at them one last time, his eyes filled with tears and theirs were as well.

Quackity knelt down and reached a hand toward him, his eyes wide and terrified. He looked at him with praying eyes, as though praying to any gods out there that he wouldn't go. He said something to Tommy-

And Tommy was pulled into the dark, whisked away into it like a seashell in the water. And everything went quiet.

## Chapter End Notes

I saw someone in the previous chapters predict that Tommy was going to get turned, and I was already planning on it so I just went ahead with killing him off.

AND WITH THAT, THE BENCHTRIO IS DEAD. ANY DUO INCLUDING TOMMY IS DEAD NOW. I'M ONLY SLIGHTLY SORRY.

# Strength In Numbers

## Chapter Summary

The six remaining members of the SMP make a break for the camp exit after Tommy finally turns, but the woods are laced with danger, and splitting up could either save their lives or kill them all.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Niki yelped as the boy knocked over the support beams in the tent, and the whole thing came crashing down onto the group. She heard as the others were buried under the soft fabric, and it was light to the touch for her. It was warm as well, which was a surprise because of how cold the snowy plains were these days. If Niki had truly wanted, she could have just gone to sleep on the muddy ground and been completely fine to stay there.

She was genuinely thinking of just letting herself sleep. She closed her eyes...

And a hand roughly grabbed her wrist, yanking her out from underneath the warmth and back into the cold. Niki shook her head and watched as Puffy dragged her out from the tent, and saw people beyond her scrambling to get others.

Something was off about it, though. There were less people than she knew for a fact were in the camp - as if a good half of them had disappeared in the two days time that she'd spent in the Nether.

*Wait. A thought struck her. One day in the Nether is about a week in the Overworld. Did more people go missing while we were gone and Quackity didn't tell us? Or did he just straight up not notice?*

Niki groaned and pushed herself up, the back of her neck stinging a little bit from the lava. Puffy helped her up and led her a little further back from the collapsed tent.

"Thanks," she said breathlessly, and she saw the fear sparking in the other woman's eyes. Niki turned to see Quackity helping Foolish out from underneath the tent, and the totem looked dazed. A moment later, the slime emerged from beneath the red cloth without aid, his eyes wide in terror as he backed away.

"Tommy!" Quackity shouted. He reached a hand to where the blonde boy once was under the tent, his voice high with fear. "Tommy, take my hand!"

"Quackity, get away!" Foolish yelled. Puffy's hand gripped tight on Niki's shoulder as Foolish ran toward Quackity to shove him out of the way.

They both fell to the ground just as the tent was thrown away, and an eardrum-shattering screech rang loud through the cold forest. Niki yelped and covered her ears, but it was too late - as her hand reached her head, her ears were already ringing loudly, and everything around her was almost dead quiet aside from the ringing.

She shut her eyes, and shook her head, trying to clear the ringing. Puffy's hand stayed on her shoulder, a comfort in the quiet.

Niki opened her eyes again, and took her hands away from her ears. The ringing had dimmed, and she could hear things better now. The small camp was in chaos, and Foolish had Quackity pinned down as the other man tried to force him off, presumably to get to Tommy.

*There isn't a Tommy anymore*, Niki realized. The screech had been their signal. The young, scruffy boy, who'd done so much and been through things worse than death... was gone. In the blink of an eye, he was gone.

And in his place was a monster.

Niki looked over to where he'd been and swiftly pulled the ax from its place on her belt, the dark sheen of the netherite glinting in the dying daylight. Enchantments rippled through the metal like waves in an ocean as the sun shimmered off of it. She didn't have time to mourn right now, not when there were still people in danger.

The creature before her at first seemed to still look like Tommy. His blonde hair was still there, and his signature red and white shirt barely stood out against the snow. Had someone else been looking, they would have thought it was him.

Then Niki looked closer. And she saw the monster that had overtaken him.

In place of what had once been his legs were long, what seemed to be fluffy tentacles, each one tipped at the end by a long, dagger-like claw. They were ringed, almost like a raccoon's tail. A few of them kept him upright, while the rest thrashed and looked around like there were eyes on the ends of them.

Tommy's arms weren't arms anymore - they were feathery wings, and all of the feathers were ripped and torn badly enough that this thing wouldn't be able to get off the ground if it tried. In a fight, Niki knew that useless wings would be a liability - Phil had taught her that early in the Syndicate's training, as one of his own wings was to be torn.

Niki couldn't see the thing's face yet, but she had a feeling it wouldn't be much longer until she did. And she didn't want to see it.

"Guys, let's move!" Niki shouted. Foolish and Quackity, still on the ground and staring at the thing in horror, started moving almost the moment that Niki called. The slime scrambled after Quackity, but Puffy ran back toward the medical tents.

"Puffy, where are you going?" Niki cried. The creature still hadn't noticed them - it seemed to be having trouble getting its bearings. They couldn't rely on its sensory overload much longer, and she knew that.

“I’m going for Eret!” Puffy called back. “We can’t just leave her here with this thing on the loose!”

“You could die!”

The words stopped Puffy in her tracks, and the woman turned to face her. Her gentle eyes were filled with firm determination. Her sword glinted at her side, and her brown and white hair waved in the gentle breeze.

“I know,” she said softly. “But I can’t leave someone else to die in my place. It’s the right thing to do. And Eret won’t make it out of here alive without someone helping her.”

Niki couldn’t argue with that. Puffy was right - leaving Eret here meant pretty much certain death. But it didn’t stop her from being scared. Puffy was someone she cared deeply about, perhaps someone she even trusted.

*You can’t trust her; she’ll betray you!* her thoughts yelled at her. A pattern she’d gotten all too familiar with sinking into.

*This is my fiancee, Niki thought firmly. She is one of the only people I can trust. She’s the only one that I can trust without worrying that she’ll betray me for some stupid cause.*

Before Niki could call to her, she was already away in the rest of the mess of tents to find the king of the SMP, and she couldn’t see her anymore. All that was left was the creature.

Niki knew she didn’t want to fight this thing. It was already three heads taller than her, and much bigger, and even with her armor and weapons, she knew she was not going to be able to take this thing out on her own. She could try convincing Foolish and Quackity, but given how shaken Quackity had looked when he’d seen the creature and Foolish’s pretty dismal PvP skills, she wasn’t sure she’d be able to rely on them in a fight. As for the slime, she could see by his face that he’d never seen combat in his life, so he wouldn’t be a useful ally in a fight either.

The creature screeched again, its wails sounding through the air like a scratchy, cursed church bell. It was so painfully loud, so filled with an eerie grief and unspoken sadness that it almost made her pity the creature. She still had yet to see its face, and another wave of unwillingness to do so washed over her.

“Quackity, Foolish, get the slime and move!” Niki shouted. Foolish nodded and helped Quackity to his feet, and Niki grabbed the slime’s arm and yanked him away from the creature through the remains of the tent and the snow. The slime didn’t protest when she pulled him away, and she barely noticed as the broken bits of wood and clumps of snow got caught in his arms. They started running, but somewhere deep down Niki could feel her heartstrings pulling from worry.

The creature shook its head, and Niki knew for a fact it was coming out of its confusion from the change. If they didn’t get out of the camp fast, they would have to deal with a disoriented monster that could deafen them if they weren’t careful.

“Go, go, go!” Niki couldn’t tell who was yelling, as she was paying attention to something else. Something that boded much worse for their survival.

She could hear things moving around throughout the forests beyond the fences, the sounds of even more creatures moving through the bushes. She saw the moon slowly rising beyond the camp, and the stars slowly becoming brighter as the sun on the other horizon dimmed and faded down into the ground. The sounds of the creatures made her extremely uneasy, but the thing that made her the most uneasy was just how many noises there seemed to be. Where they would have expected to hear only five or six creatures after leaving the Nether, there seemed to be around twenty separate creatures all rumbling around in the forests beyond.

Niki looked at the gate leading out of the camp, and there was something about the hill that made her hesitate. Something that told her that they shouldn’t go up that hill.

“Guys, wait!” she called. Foolish and Quackity paused and turned to look at her. Their expressions were incredulous, and even the slime looked at her oddly.

“What do you mean, wait?” Quackity snapped. “We’re trying to run away from that thing, and you want us to stop? Are you insane, Niki?”

“Quackity, you don’t understand,” Niki said. “Something doesn’t feel right about the hill over there. We shouldn’t go over it.”

“But it’s just a hill,” the slime said nervously. “There shouldn’t be anything wrong with it. Unless there is something wrong with it...”

“Oh for fucks sake, Charlie,” Quackity said. Niki was surprised that it took her this long to figure out the slime’s name, but Charlie was definitely a fit for it. “Do you actually believe her shit? She could be lying and trying to get us killed, or maybe she’s just trying to force us to wait for Puffy and Eret. They’re probably already dead, there isn’t any point in waiting.”

Niki saw red. Did he really think that they were both so incapable of getting out of there?

“You’re wrong,” she snapped. “They’re some of the most capable people I know, Quackity, and that wasn’t the only reason I stopped us. There are way more creatures than I initially thought there were, and if we go over that hill, we’re putting ourselves in a lot more danger than if we stay below.”

“You know what?” His voice cracked through the cold, stiff air like a whip. “We’re not dealing with your lies anymore. We’re not dealing with any of this shit anymore! We’ve been dragged into something that wasn’t our problem to begin with, and look where that got us! Almost the entire server is dead because we got dragged hook, line and sinker into another problem. Charlie, come on, we’re leaving!”

He grabbed the slime’s other arm, and tried to yank him away, but Niki kept as firm a hold as she could on the one she still had. Charlie looked extremely confused and upset, and if the situation hadn’t already been terrifying to him, this was only making it worse.

"Quackity, you can't leave!" Niki yelled. Her anger was clouding her, and she couldn't really feel what she was doing anymore. "It's too dangerous for you guys to try and go back home. You know that!"

"Well, I guess I'll just have to account for the danger myself," he retorted, and he pulled Charlie towards him again.

"Would you two please just calm down and talk about this like reasonable people instead of using Charlie as a tug of war rope?" Foolish shouted. Neither Niki nor Quackity responded to the totem.

"You know what?" Niki said. She suddenly let go of Charlie. "Fine. If you want to get yourselves killed, then that will not be my problem. You're not my responsibility."

Quackity grinned and pulled Charlie away, and before anyone could say another word they were out the fence gate and over the hill. Niki watched them go, the uneasy feeling filling her as she watched them go. Something still told her that going that way was wrong, and she had a feeling that she wouldn't be seeing them again any time soon.

Foolish and Niki stood by the fence gate, both of them keeping a keen eye out for Puffy and Eret. There were tall clouds of snow and dust where the creature had destroyed the remaining tents, and Niki was just about to pull her ax once more when she saw two figures emerging from the flurry.

It was Puffy, helping Eret out of the path that the creature behind them was forging. Its screeches were awfully loud, and every time it screamed Niki felt like she could only freeze in place like a scared rabbit. She saw that Puffy and Eret were freezing up too, and even Foolish was stopping in his tracks to go and help them get away from the creatures.

*Wait, Niki thought. There's more noise than just the one.*

*There's more in the forest. They've all come.*

*And there are more than we thought.*

Puffy and Eret were almost to them. They could make it if they moved faster.

"COME QUICKER, GUYS!" Foolish yelled at them. Eret looked up and turned to Puffy. She let go of the other woman's arm and started running of her own accord. It was slower than she would have liked, but at least they were both running.

Niki was watching desperation rising inside her. The burn on the back of her neck tingled, and suddenly a sharp pain shot through her neck. She yelled and dropped to the ground, clapping the back of her neck as the pain hit her.

"Niki? Are you okay?" Foolish asked. He dropped down next to her and carefully put a hand on her back.

"I'm fine," she gasped. Her burn wasn't that bad, was it? The lava that had caused it had only been on her neck for a moment. It couldn't have been that bad.

She forced herself to her feet, but something felt fundamentally different. She couldn't pin it, but she felt like she was connected to something.

"Niki! Are you alright?" Puffy yelled as she got close. She helped her to her feet, the thundering sounds of the creatures in the forest growing louder by the moment. "Come on, we all need to get out of here before one of these things catches us."

Niki grabbed Puffy's hand and got everyone moving. If they got out of here alive, she was going to ask Puffy to look at the burn. She hadn't before purely because everything had been so chaotic that she hadn't had the chance to ask.

### **"And where do you think you're going?"**

Out of nowhere, a long, clawed hand reached out of the forest toward them. Niki was shoved out of the way by someone, and Foolish and Eret hit the ground after her.

She looked around to see a twisted, eerie monster, all black except for some red vines and its white eyes and mouth. It wore a hood, nearly as dark as the rest of the creature, but the edge was lined red. Some of the skin would stick together, and as the monster pulled it away from where it had contacted, it drew out a gooey, sticky liquid that was filled with holes like slime. Parts of its gangly legs and arms were draped in horribly familiar red vines, but they seemed to only be growing from the creature - they had noticed none in their time on the Greater SMP.

"Bad! Put me down, you asshole!"

Oh, *hell* no.

They all forced themselves to their feet and glared at Bad, who was grinning maniacally at Puffy, which it was holding in its clawed hand by her legs.

"Put her down!" Niki screamed. She could feel the rage inside of her building up, a writhing, angry feeling that wanted to burst out and kill the thing threatening Puffy. It was a familiar rage - the same one that had fueled her when she'd betrayed the only home she'd ever known, the same one that kept her going day and night.

She drew her ax, the enchantments reacting to her anger and rippling violently through the dark blade. Niki barely noticed as Foolish and Eret geared up as well.

**"Oh, did you want this?"** Bad asked in a teasing, mocking tone. The creature's wide, white eyes became wider as it dipped its eerie grin closer to her, bobbing its head like it was going to fall off. **"Why don't you come and take it, then?"**

Those words were what finally shoved Niki over the edge. She couldn't control her anger anymore, not with this... *thing* outright taunting her. And with someone she cared about, no less!

Niki yelled and swung her ax at the creature's face, and it only laughed as the ax missed entirely and lodged itself in the ground. Fury rolled through her as she violently dislodged it

and swung it again. It sliced a line the creature's ginning face, and it hissed angrily and drew back.

**"Well, that was rude,"** it snarled. **"I was just going to give her back after I played with her for a little bit... But now? I think I'll keep her."**

"You put her down right now!" Niki shrieked. Puffy's eyes were trained on the creature, wide and terrified, and Foolish and Eret were behind her, but advancing on the creature. Its face returned to that horrible grin, and suddenly, Niki felt a weird chill run through her.

*It's going to do something to her,* her thoughts whispered, and Niki's blood ran cold as the creature turned to Puffy and slowly began tightening its hold on her legs.

"OW! BAD, PUT ME THE FUCK DOWN, YOU'RE HURTING ME!" Puffy yelled angrily. She started punching the creature, trying to get it to loosen its grip, but it only tightened. Niki raised her ax again and ran towards the fence, swinging it wildly. Crimson overtook her vision and she attacked, the one voice in her head screaming for the creature's blood.

## Chapter End Notes

I am sorry I didn't get this chapter to you guys sooner, I was basically forced off of WiFi and off of service for three weeks and had no time to write it.

But on the plus side, I hope you enjoy!

# Mutated Loss

## Chapter Summary

Puffy, still trapped in the creature's claws, learns of just how horrifying the thing intends their fate to be...

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Even though she hated to admit it, Puffy had a feeling that she was beyond screwed. She was being held by one of these monsters, very tightly to the point where it felt like it was crushing her legs, and her friends and fiancee were attacking the creature rather uncoordinatedly, with Niki just swinging wildly at Bad with her ax and Foolish trying to protect the king while also trying to get Bad to drop her.

Puffy winced as the hold on her legs tightened again. She angrily and wildly punched at the hand holding her, but to no avail. She was only barely damaging the creature. It gripped its long, curving claws tighter around her legs as she hit it

The thing that had once been BadBoyHalo screeched as Niki's ax connected with it, and she saw the ground below splatter with a dark, obsidian liquid, sinking into the snow and turning the white crystals black. Even then, they glittered ominously in the slowly fading sunlight, the reds and pinks turning a horrifying shade of ruby in the fading evening.

Foolish and Eret were both trying to help Niki, but her wild swings and uncoordinated, random attacks on the creature seemed to make it difficult for them to get close enough to the creature to actually hit it. They seemed to be locked in a dance of attacking the creature and dodging Niki's violently glimmering blade.

“FOOLISH, BE CAREFUL!” Puffy shrieked as the totem barely dodged an attack by the tall being's other claw, which was swiping furiously at the people on the ground. She was only remembering now that her son was terrible in combat, and her fiancee's wild assault wasn't helping him.

Eret, on the other hand, could hardly move close to the creature without flinching in pain from her injuries. She definitely should not have been up and walking so soon, Puffy knew that.

The creature's grip on her legs was getting to be too much, and she started hitting the thing with all her might, trying to get it to let her go. It barely flinched, and as Puffy landed a quick strike to its claws, it loosened its grip slightly. Hitting its claws wasn't the best idea - she'd hit the sharp edge with her punch, and her hand was bleeding - but it seemed like the best way to force this thing into letting her go.

Puffy kept hitting the claws, the sharp edges cutting lines into her fists and her blood was soon drenching the creature's claws. There was a strange sting in her hands where the cuts were, and she felt tears running down her face as the sharp pains shot through her like crossbow bolts.

An angry screech emitted from the creature, tearing through the crisp air as Niki's ax cut deep into its hand, and more black blood spurted onto the ground.

**"I tire of your nonsense!"** it howled. **"You fight well, but not well enough. You have someone with you too injured to fight, and yet you expect her to defend herself? Truly pathetic!"**

The white eyes shone and lit up the darkening forest, bathing Puffy's friends in an eerie white glow. She watched on in fear, her ears pinned to her head as the creature leaned in close to Niki, Foolish and Eret.

**"You cannot stop me now. I've already spread so far and killed so many that you'll be lucky to find people willing to rise against me. And by the time you do, everything will be under my control."**

"We will stop you!" Eret shouted angrily. Her voice rose above the snarling beast's gloating. "This is our home you've chosen to invade, and you should know that we will take it back. We've done it before, we'll do it again!"

The creature paused, its eyes blinking slowly, dimming the light on everything and making Puffy's world go dark for a moment. Then it reopened its eyes and leaned toward Eret, who stood her ground and glared at the thing dead on.

**"Your faith and courage is admirable,"** it said. **"Your friends and enemies had the same sentiments. All of them so foolishly believed that they could defeat me even once I was already inside them and turning them into my puppets. Even your friend Badboyhalo thought he could defeat me from within."** It gestured to Bad's body with its free arm, the red vines sprouting from its shoulders and arms curling tightly around it and the sticky skin peeling and reattaching in places where it shouldn't. It made Puffy feel sick.

**"He thought he would win because he had already faced the Egg. Almost everyone thought I was the Egg until they came under my control. And even he didn't have the power to fight me."**

There was noise coming from beyond the bushes, beyond the trees and beyond the forests. Puffy could hear it, and as she turned to look a cold claw of terror made its way down her spine.

Monsters. Everywhere she looked here, there were only monstrous beasts using the bodies of her friends, mutilated and twisted and wrong. She saw the monsters that were Ranboo and Tubbo, one tall and lanky and torn up, the other with wings and limbs flailing in every direction. She saw a three-legged, hole-filled creature, and its twisted smile cut through its face. A pang went through her heart as she realized it was her little duckling.

A much larger spider came out right behind Dream, its face turned down like those of creepers - she could only assume that it was Sam, based on the sketches Techno had shown them so many months ago.

But then there were other creatures, some of them difficult to pinpoint, but others that were easier than walking among grass.

Puffy saw a ghostly being with empty eyes and an empty smile on its face, with blue blood dripping from its mouth and blue flowers growing from a wound on its chest. It didn't take a genius to recognize the ghostly form of Wilbur. She saw a large, angelic-looking bird with too many eyes, but the green and white hat told her it was Phil. Following behind Phil and Wilbur was a large, furious looking piglin, mutated beyond recognition, with a long tail and symbols humming around its head. That had to be Techno. She saw Niki gaze at them in despair, and felt pity for Niki.

The thing that had once been Tommy rushed out of the camp, and Puffy finally got a good look at its face. It hadn't changed much, but his eyes were slit and teeth sprouted from his lips. It called to the creatures , and to Puffy's surprise, they recoiled in... horror? Shock? She knew they could still see through their new bodies - maybe they were shaken that Tommy had joined their ranks.

With every passing glance over the once peaceful clearing, Puffy felt more and more despair creeping into her. Over there was a diamond encrusted beast with more red vines growing from it that had to be Skeppy. Over here was a twisted, torn in half cat with a long spine and spilling guts that had to be Antfrost. A lumbering, twisted tree with holes in the wooden root-legs, with a mushroom cap and familiar round, white-rimmed glasses, who was most likely George.

A much smaller one zipped around in the snow near Tubbo and Ranboo, its eyes wide with a twisted foot and small lights coming from its head.

*They got Michael too, she thought.*

More rustling came from the hill Niki had been so insistent that Quackity and Charlie not go over, and two more large beings came over it with Quackity and Charlie in their long claws.

One was fiery and slithering, hissing like mad and covered in flames, and it was holding the two men with utmost care. The other one was torn in half, walking on long, clock-hand shaped arms that were longer than the snake creature's tail.

**“Those fools thought they could get away. The scarred one dragged the slime into it,”** the monsters all said in perfect unison. **“So I will take him as my own, so he can be my puppet too. After all, I think he’ll be lonely without his fiances.”**

“You don't have to do this!” Puffy shouted. The creature holding her turned its head toward her, the beam-like gaze landing on her evenly. “Why are you even doing this? We have done nothing to you! Do you even realize how many people have died because of you? How much grief you've put us through?” Puffy's voice softened. “Haven't we already been through

enough? We're barely recovering from what Dream has done, and now you inflict this torment on us. Why?"

The creature regarded Puffy with a somewhat curious look in its eyes. The grinning mouth dropped for a few moments as it made every creature in the area turn to look at her. Hundreds of eyes locked onto Puffy, and she silently cursed herself for opening her mouth.

**"I know you have been through many things,"** it said carefully. **"But I have no regard for your sentiments towards me. You are nothing more to me than mannequins without strings. Even your most masterful manipulator comes second to none of my ability. Without a master, the puppets lay useless, and no show can be performed. But when someone attaches their strings, when they figure out what makes them work, what makes them tick and what you can use to keep your hold over them, the show is splendid and the puppets have a purpose.**

**"You have all put on an excellent show. There is no denying that. But as it begins to fade into memory, and from memory into myth, who will reignite the show? Who will make things fun for the puppets, who will conduct their symphony? Nobody will. And your symphony is far from over, youngling. Your last puppetmaster couldn't pull the strings well enough to keep the show going. He lost control, and the puppets laid useless.**

**"So I will do it myself."**

Puffy felt a tear open in her heart. The only reason this thing wanted to hurt them so badly was for its own sick entertainment? And what in the hell did it mean by "your symphony hasn't ended yet"?

**"I will explain my intentions no further."** Every creature suddenly snapped its head up toward what had once been Bad, and without another word, they all began moving away into the trees. Quackity and Charlie were carried away, and everyone was just suddenly gone.

The creature's grip on her leg tightened again, and suddenly, she was being pulled away into the forest, away from her friend, her son, and her fiancee.

"NO!" she screamed, trying so hard to fight against this sick-minded thing. She forced its claws, she punched, she screamed, but nothing worked. And eventually, the creature turned to her and stopped, its wide white smile growing. A small pang sent itself through her that made her feel suddenly exhausted, and the creature's smile grew even wider.

**"Welcome to my web, darling."**

Puffy looked into Bad's white, glaring eyes one more time.

*I wish none of this ever happened. Niki, Foolish, Eret... I'm so sorry I can't be there anymore.*

And suddenly, Puffy's eyes closed and she slumped over, all while she felt a presence begin dancing on the edge of her mind with unhinged glee.

## Chapter End Notes

THIS TOOK SO MUCH LONGER THAN I THOUGHT BUT HOLY FUCK THIS IS WORTH IT

I'VE MADE A DEADLINE TO HAVE THIS TIME FINISHED BY THE END OF MY FIRST SEMESTER, SO HOPEFULLY AROUND DECEMBER/JANUARY.

also i cannot believe this thing is almost a whole year old

# Lost Life

## Chapter Summary

Niki can no longer believe anything she's seeing. Everything for her seems to have gone completely numb, but she can't shake the feeling that her own grief isn't the only problem she has to deal with...

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Niki stood still as the creatures disappeared into the forests. Everything went cold - all of her senses were numb to the world. Nothing seemed *real* anymore. The crushed trees and splintered branches , the thrown up snow and the black sky all swirled together into a blur that she could no longer place. Something inside Niki broke. Something essential, snapped in two like a scissor cutting melting string.

She couldn't think anymore. Couldn't breathe, couldn't see, couldn't hear or feel *anything*. Her heart seemed to freeze and her throat closed, like the world itself had suddenly just stopped moving altogether. Nothing seemed... Well, it didn't seem real to her anymore.

Niki barely noticed as she dropped to the ground. She barely noticed as the cold, black snow stung her hands and covered them in the dark, still somewhat warm liquid, shining faintly in the half-moon. She barely noticed tears running down her face, or that the cold was starting to seep deep into her hands and her bones, chilling her to the point of numbness.

She barely noticed as Eret and Foolish ran towards the broken and churned forest.

She had no idea how much time passed after they left. Time didn't seem real anymore. A faint ringing in her ears slowly droned up to a tolling boom, and she could hear nothing.

Puffy was gone. Quackity and Charlie were gone. Phil, Wilbur, Techno, Jack, Ranboo... all of them gone. She was alone again. The shock of it forced her to close her eyes and put her cold hands to her face.

*As if freezing your face is going to bring any of them back.*

The first few times she'd seen these demons, they were just mindless creatures, killing because they could. No motivation, no person working the strings behind the scenes. Now it was different. Niki knew they were in there, knew they were suffering and trying not to give up fighting.

That just made it worse.

Niki forced herself to her feet, but promptly fell over again. For a few moments, she wasn't sure why she couldn't just stand normally and go somewhere - anywhere that wasn't this ripped up, too-quiet forest drenched in innocent blood. Niki tried again, but couldn't hold herself up long enough before a feeling of lightheadedness crossed through her and she fell once more.

Something dripped out of her mouth. It made her cough into her already blood-spattered hand, which was becoming crusted and dry, and she could only watch as glistening droplets spilled from her mouth into her hand, shining brighter than the monster's blood.

She was bleeding badly. She hardly even realized until she tentatively put her hands on her side, where a deep, dark gash had torn through her left side, and her hand came away redder than a crimson fungus.

Niki wondered where Eret and Foolish were. She wondered if she would ever see any of her friends again. She halfheartedly wondered if she was dying permanently, but a brief glance at her wrist showed all three gentle red hearts still faintly glowing in the dark.

As Niki slowly let herself fall onto the black snow, her mind fading away into a gentle nothingness, there was one thing she did not need to wonder about. It was the only thing her already fading mind was set on, *hellbent* on doing. It was one of the things she was best at doing, and one that she would do no matter the cost. No matter if she lost all of her lives, she would complete her new goal.

*Vengeance.*

*For all of them.*

*Before no one is left to execute it.*

And with that thought, Niki's eyes slipped shut, her pink hair strewn in the snow like a blossoming flower as a few tears slipped from her face.

-+=-

Somewhere in the afterlife, a small counter stood, three glowing hearts in its center.

A heart shuddered carefully, like a trapped bird.

And then a small crack resounded through the darkness, and the heart grayed and fell into nothing.

## Chapter End Notes

okay, look i needed someone to lose a canon life eventually. I can't just turn them all into monsters without somebody losing a full-on canon life. basic principle.

but yeah! I'm trying to get this finished by late December/early January, so expect thing to get a bit more intense for a bit

also yes its a short chapter but i need filler chapters.

# Silence

## Chapter Summary

There are only three people left out of everyone on the server, and Eret and Foolish are not taking anymore chances with the monsters. So they choose to flee.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Eret was beyond pissed.

These things were no longer just another problem - they were engaging in full on war, and its methods of transformation were simply torturous. They'd killed thousands of people, some of them her own subjects and people she knew. It had killed her friends and turned them into monsters she couldn't even begin to comprehend.

She was pretty ready to kill this thing herself, even if that meant getting more hurt than she already was, which in itself was inconvenient.

She and Foolish were racing after the monsters in the woods, trying to catch up to Puffy. If they could get her back, then maybe things would be okay. They would have more resistance against the monsters. They might actually be able to figure out a solution.

“PUFFY!” Foolish shouted, running ahead of Eret as they both caught sight of a snaking red vine trailing off into the trees. The totem was fast, for someone who usually only created megabuilds. Eret felt a flare of surprise bound up in her, and cursed at her still-healing injuries for not letting her run faster.

“GET BACK HERE, BAD!” Foolish yelled. There was an anger in his voice that few people had ever heard before, and it was quite the surprise to hear him like that. “YOU GIVE HER BACK RIGHT NOW!”

But his effort seemed to be in vain. The creature did not stop, nor did it even acknowledge Foolish's challenge. Instead, it sped up and turned in the trees, and by the time Eret got to it, the monster was gone.

“NO!” Foolish screamed. The totem tried to run after it, tears beginning to fall from his eyes, but Eret put out a hand onto his shoulder and pulled him back

“ERET, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? LET ME GO!” Foolish screamed at her. “I CAN STILL HELP HER, I CAN GET HER BACK-”

"No, Foolish. It's too late. She's been taken." Eret nearly choked on the words herself. For so long Puffy had been someone she was close to, someone who she'd pretty much lived with then the Knights of Eret had still been around. They'd been good friends, and it hurt her to announce her death.

"YOU'RE WRONG!" Foolish cried. Tears were dripping down the totem's face, and his sharp teeth were bared in anger. "WE CAN STILL GET HER, THERE'S TIME!"

Eret bit the inside of her mouth, trying to hold back her own tears for his sake. She wished so desperately that it was true. So desperately that Foolish's hope was real.

*It's not real. She's gone. You will never see her again.*

*I only will if we can reverse this.*

"Eret, please, we need to go after her!" Foolish practically begged. "She could still be alive, we could get her back."

A long moment stretched thin between the two, the tension thicker than it had ever been. Then Eret simply shook her head. There was no way that Puffy was going to stay alive much longer. And if they went after her, they would end up dead too.

They would leave Niki all by herself to figure this out. Eret couldn't let that happen. She needed to atone for her own mistakes, and she couldn't bear watching this horror show go on much longer.

The last spark of hope in Foolish's emerald eyes flickered out, and their sheen faded into a dull luster. The totem dropped to the ground, tears pouring from his lifeless eyes as he shivered in the cold. Eret carefully dropped next to him and gently put a hand on his back. The gold was surprisingly warm despite the freezing snow around them. She quietly let her own tears fall into the snow, taking her sunglasses off for a moment to let them fall freely.

For a few minutes, neither spoke, neither moved. They just sat, quietly crying in a wake of destruction in the forest. Splintered branches and churned, muddy snow surrounded them.

Then a thought hit her. And it made her panic.

"Foolish. Foolish, we left Niki by herself back at the camp," she said, shoving her sunglasses back on. "We need to make sure she's okay."

"So you'll check on her but you won't go after Puffy?" Foolish snapped angrily.

"Puffy is gone, Foolish. We need to make sure everyone who is still alive is okay." Saying it so bluntly was like stabbing herself in the heart.

Eret forced herself off the ground and started moving back toward the destroyed camp, as small, lightning pings of pain from her injuries forced her to run slower. An unease was building inside her that she could not place - like something had gone horribly wrong.

She heard faint footsteps in the snow behind her, and after a moment, Foolish's arm went under her own and started helping her run back to the camp.

The run was still quite slow, and by the time they returned to the camp, the moon was high in the sky and the stars were glittering brightly.

Everything seemed to be the same. Except that when Eret looked around, she couldn't see Niki. The pink haired girl was nowhere to be found. She looked toward the place where the two had left her standing.

"Lets check where she was," Foolish whispered. He had no need to whisper, but Eret could feel the heavy weight of the grief around them covering the air like a blanket.

"I had the same thought."

The two walked over to where they'd left Niki - and then ran over when they saw fresh, red blood draining into the snow.

"NIKI!" Eret shouted, dropping into the snow next to her. A huge, gashing claw mark was ripped into her side, still bleeding heavily. Her mouth was painted red, and her eyes were closed. Eret flipped over her left arm, and saw one of her lives was gone.

Gone. Niki had died - not permanently, but she'd lost a canon life. Eret could see her eyes slowly beginning to flutter open, despite the fact that she was still bleeding out into the snow and a few of her ribs were broken.

"Holy fuck, holy fuck, oh my gods no," Foolish whispered in a panic. He froze, looking over Niki's slowly dying body.

"Niki! Niki, are you awake?" Eret called, trying to stay as calm as possible. There was a point when the person would just be completely dead, while their body healed enough for them to wake up without killing them again. During that point - it could take anywhere from minutes to days, maximum - they would be entirely unresponsive. Essentially, they were dead. The only difference between temporary death and permanent death was that their body would not rot.

"She's in the trance, Foolish. We need to get her somewhere safe enough for everyone to rebuild their strength. Come on, help me lift her," Eret commanded. Her usually authoritative voice was wavering, and even she could tell that she did not sound confident in her decision.

"Won't it hurt her?" Foolish asked. He seemed quiet and hesitant, so much so that it startled Eret on the inside. Foolish was usually so excited and a bit impulsive, but that was gone. "I mean, shouldn't we at least try to bandage her?"

"I don't have any here, and my castle is too far away to carry her, unless we travel to the Nether."

"Then let's travel through the Nether!" Foolish snapped out of nowhere. "We just need to get her somewhere, right? You said you don't have any medical supplies, so why don't we take

her to my summer home?"

"Your summer home is even farther from here," Eret pointed out. "Even in the Nether, that's a long way to drag an unconscious person with a full on open gash in her side."

"That's not my point," Foolish said carefully. "My summer home is far enough away from people that those things won't go there in search of other people. We might actually be safer there than we are anywhere near the SMP."

Eret sighed, her mind filled with confusion and worry and panic. They certainly couldn't stay here - Niki was in a death trance and they had nothing to help her with it. That, and the monsters could be back by dawn if they decided Eret, Foolish, and Niki were worth adding to the growing bestiary of creatures. On the other hand, it would involve a long, painfully slow trip through the Nether to a place so remote that not even Eret could find her way home if she tried. After all, Foolish's summer home was apparently in a desert, and the only desert Eret knew of was Las Nevadas, even if perhaps it was a fake desert.

She remembered Wilbur telling her that Quackity had dragged loads of sand and even scorpions into the area just to make it look more natural. A small, sorrowful ping zipped through her as she remembered.

*Don't get lost in your memories. You need to focus,* her mind said, swiftly snapping her out of her dazed thoughts.

"Fine. we'll take Niki to your summer home, but we need to be fast, otherwise we could get screwed over by these things." Without another word, Eret carefully put an arm under Niki and hauled her up. More blood gushed from the wound and dripped onto Eret's sleeves, but she hardly noticed as Foolish grabbed her other arm and swung it over her shoulder.

"Let's get to that Nether portal, shall we?" They both started dragging Niki's body through the deep, darkened snow, the stars glimmering ominously above them. Everything was quiet - there were no birds singing their nightly songs, no owls calling to find food, not even a breeze rustling the branches or swinging the snow up into one of its dances. It was all just quiet.

It felt too quiet for Eret, and as they exited the once-safe perimeter, she felt like she was being watched by hundreds of eyes, silently judging her. But every time the thought that they might be followed drifted through her head, she looked around, and there was nothing. It was just empty.

The monsters were gone - she couldn't deny that. But it didn't feel like they'd left. It felt like they were just lurking somewhere among the trees, ominously watching, waiting for their next victim... or their next meal.

*Don't think about it, don't think about it. Just get to the portal. Get there, get to Foolish's summer home, and you'll be home free. There are not many places for them to hide in the desert. You'll be safer there.*

By the time they'd reached the portal, Eret was overwhelmed by the eeriness of the silence, and before Foolish could even ask anything she was through the portal and in the Nether. At least here there wasn't oppressive, pure silence.

The sounds of bubbling lava and gentle ghast calls filled her ears as they warped into hell. Eret breathed in the air gently - and immediately started coughing as the smell of the hundreds of burning, decaying bodies reached her nose. She'd nearly forgotten that these people were here. She didn't even have to look to know some were her own subjects - she'd seen them the first time.

A small wave of sadness rolled through her as she realized just how bad this was getting. Her own people were dying or were dead because these things existed. And she could do nothing to stop them. Anger rushed through her, and she had to force herself not to curl her fists too tightly around Niki's arm.

"Lets move," Foolish commanded sternly. His voice was so quiet and cold, so different from the Foolish that Eret knew. Her heart sank as they walked across the burning hot rocks below their feet, following the heated cobblestone paths and blackstone bridges that lined the great lava lake below. The slow, drooping lava falls bubbled and spat bits of molten rock into the lake below. Small, warped blue nylium vines crept across the paths, making them look old and worn and like they were falling into ruin. It was oddly beautiful, the great blue vines growing towards a hidden sky and red vines dropping so low they nearly brushed the lava. For a moment, the wild, untamed beauty of the Nether sparked memories of the days before L'Manburg, when the land was forested and unspoiled by conflict and destruction. It had been so beautiful. Now the only beauty rested in a ruined city and a crater in the ground, with an obsidian grid crossing the sky and growing vines so long you could have climbed to the top from the bottom of the hole.

A tear formed in Eret's eye, and sizzled away the moment it hit netherrack. Time gently drifted by as they walked, the blood from Niki's injuries dropping into the ground and boiling.

Everything that was normally a threat in the nether - piglins, magma cubes, hoglins, ghasts - all seemingly gone in the blink of an eye. Nothing disturbed them as they silently made their way through the hot, formerly dangerous place.

That didn't stop Eret from feeling uneasy, even with her most powerful netherite armor equipped. Her other hand was only one noise away from dropping to the hilt of her sword, the unease slowly turning to fear.

Not a word was spoken as they passed through the main Nether hub. Past empty netherite mines. Through a crimson forest that was all but eerily devoid of life. Across deathly silent nether wastes. The silence Eret had once so relished among the chaos of the server was now putting her over the edge.

A small, roughly carved Nether portal loomed ahead of them, and Foolish smiled slightly when he saw it.

"Home sweet home," he whispered, barely loud enough for her to hear. The jagged obsidian raked through the roof of the nether wastes, and as Foolish took a step toward the portal, a small snap came from somewhere in the overgrown mushrooms.

Eret didn't think. She grabbed Niki's arm firmly and ran through the portal - she was not waiting around to see whatever that was.

As the purple hues of the portal gently enveloped her and Niki, she let herself fall into it, begging that when they got to the other side, nothing would be wrong.

She just wanted this to be over.

## Chapter End Notes

I see people commenting on this saying that they love it and my brain partly loves it and questions everything, but lets go, 35 chapters!

by the way the documents page i'm writing this on has 147 pages with the publication of this chapter, so if i ever felt like it i could turn this into a book and it wouldn't be called a novella lmao

# Shattering Glass Panes

## Chapter Summary

They make it back to the desert without incident, but things just never stop coming, do they?

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The shifting sands of the desert rushed gently over his netherite boots, dark against the blinding white-yellow sand. It was unfamiliar to him - he did not often wear his armor at his summer home. It was almost always peaceful out here, to the point where the only time he would ever wear something protective was when he was building up somewhere high and didn't have anything below to catch him.

Of course, he didn't really need to wear anything protective anymore. Not after he'd finished the statue. He could die a hundred times making something and it wouldn't bother him. Maybe leave him kind of sore, but other than that, nothing.

*Keep the armor on, it's safer, you don't want to end up like them.*

Foolish shook his head and forced the thought to the back of his mind. He didn't have time to think right now. He had an injured ally to help. He could think about this later, after he'd helped Niki.

Eret was looking around in awe on Niki's other side, and a faint smile crossed his face as he watched her jaw drop. Admittedly, he'd spent a lot of time working on his summer home - more than was probably healthy, as his mother had sometimes needed to force him to stop - but he was truly proud of this place, even mid-apocalypse. The tall, arching pillars that made up the frame of the jagged, pointed Nether portal behind them stood proud against the setting sun, the colors gently bouncing off of the carved sandstone and lacing the hand-shaped lapis blocks. A sphinx statue rested serenely on the sand, and the sandstone walkway they moved down faded to a rusted orange in the sunset.

Giant, beautiful sandstone pillars towered over everything, their ankh and lapis designs shining in the darkening evening, and pyramids and small buildings lined the walkways. And at the edge of it all, a tall, majestic statue loomed over a few buildings, a hand outstretched with a green, glowing eye that seemed to float on its own.

Foolish remembered finishing that statue. The second he'd placed the final block, everything had taken on an otherworlds aura, and the green glass eyes had begun to glow and float. He couldn't make sense of it, but it made the statue feel more alive to him, and that was what had mattered then.

The massive, x-shaped halo floated gently over the statue. That had been another thing that had started doing that by itself, too.

“You built this all by yourself?” Eret asked, her voice nearly whipped away by the breeze blowing through the dunes. It wasn’t asked in the way he normally received it - sarcastic about his abilities, or concern for his health, but really, genuine awe. He hadn’t had praise like that in a long time.

“Yep! Every block hand carved and hand placed by yours truly,” he said, trying to lighten the mood with a joke. “It would have been too much work to try and hire someone to help me, and making things helps me stay calm, so I decided to make a summer home completely by myself and far away from the chaos where things get easily destroyed. Pretty cool, right?”

Eret only nodded, continuing to look around like she’d never seen anything like it. Foolish smiled at their shock, the pride of it filling him and almost making him forget everything that was going on. For a moment he wanted to show Eret around and explain how he’d done things, how to carve the blocks into specific shapes and how to meld lapis and gold into pretty shapes without burning or cutting your hands because you’d slipped with the tools.

The weight of Niki’s arm around his shoulder drew him back to reality - he couldn’t do that today. Maybe one day, but not today. Maybe after this was all over and things were back to normal he could show someone how to use his tools.

But not now.

They walked for a bit, until Foolish turned them in front of a building, he opened the door and walked everyone in. Inside, a few blue beds line the walls, along with basic survival equipment like crafting tables, furnaces, and chests. He knew most of the chests were filled with leftover building blocks - he really needed to finish organizing - but a few contained things like potions, armor, and even an ender chest in one area. He knew his best potions were in the ender chest, and he carefully opened the strange, black box and started rifling around in his hidden belongings as Eret carefully set Niki on one of the beds. The woman’s torn, bloodied side oozed red liquid into the blankets, and it didn’t take long before it started dripping onto the floors Foolish always tried so hard to keep pristine. He winced as the first faintly sparkling drop fell onto the floor, and he knew it would probably stain the sandstone when he tried to clean it up.

“Eret, take these bandages and start wrapping that wound. I don’t want it getting too much blood everywhere, or for her to die again from blood loss. I’ll get healing potions and some stitching material - regen won’t close that wound alone.”

He hated how stern he sounded. How angry. It scared him.

But he couldn’t stop it. He felt like he should be angry. His mother had just been taken by those things. His ally lost a canon life. Everyone was a monster. Why *shouldn’t* he be angry?

He’d seen how shaken Eret had been when he’d quietly told her that they should take Niki here. He couldn’t even remember her being upset.

How could she be so goddamn calm about this? How could anyone be so fucking calm about this anymore? This was an apocalypse, and everyone he'd ever known was gone, and now there were only three people left.

He brought over the healing potions, and carefully poured them into Niki's wound. His hands shook as he let it drip into the gash, and pour over the torn muscle and broken ribs. They were shaking so badly that he barely got halfway through pouring the potion before Eret took it from him and put the rest in.

"You aren't able to do this right now, Foolish. I'm not an idiot - you're scared, and you need to rest too. I'll finish this myself. You rest."

Eret turned to him from her seat next to Niki, her face upturned in worry. Foolish saw the small, sparkling trails that ran down her face like diamonds where she cried.

"I can't just sleep!" he snapped suddenly. Even to himself, he sounded wrong and angry and like he wasn't himself. "Niki's fucking died and is lying there like its her deathbed, everyone in the server is either dead or turned, and now my own fucking mother is gone. HOW AM I JUST SUPPOSED TO SLEEP? HOW DO I KNOW MY WORRY WON'T JUST HAUNT ME THERE AND MAKE THINGS EVEN WORSE? I CAN'T JUST SIT HERE LIKE NOTHING'S WRONG AND NOT HELP!"

He put his head between his hands and closed his eyes. "I CAN'T JUST SIT BACK AND DO NOTHING, ERET! THIS ISN'T SOMETHING I CAN JUST TAP OUT ON! WHAT AM I IF I DON'T TRY TO HELP H-"

He stopped mid sentence as a pair of arms suddenly closed around him, and a comforting hand laid itself on his shoulder. Foolish opened his eyes to find himself enveloped in a hug, and the king stayed completely still as Foolish hesitantly wrapped his arms around her in return. He felt more tears begin to fall from his eyes, and quietly buried his face in her shoulder.

"You don't have to do anything. Just being here to witness this monstrosity is enough, I promise you that. And you'll be able to handle it better if you let yourself rest." The king's quiet plea wriggled its way into Foolish's mind, spinning around there like a swift little circle. "I'm not an idiot - I know you've barely slept since this began. So get some proper sleep, for fucks sake. You'll be able to help better if you do."

Eret started to pull away from the hug, but Foolish stopped her.

"Please don't leave me alone," he rasped. The quiet little fear of being by himself that always bubbled in the back of his mind was overflowing, and all he really wanted was someone to stay with him; he hated being by himself whenever things got tough, and just needed someone there for him. He hadn't had that since Puffy.

The thought of her made the tears come back. All he felt was overloaded; his body went numb and he felt like everything was weighed down by shackles.

Eret just nodded, and very, very carefully, led him over to one of the other beds. She sat next to him as he dropped into it, tears still freely flowing and falling into the pillows. His heart hurt. He couldn't think anymore. He built a wall around himself in his mind, of the sharp, jagged pieces from broken nether portals that shone like the darkest glass.

For a few hours, Foolish drifted between wakefulness and half-sleep. Every time he woke up, Eret would be somewhere nearby. Every time, she'd tell him that he would be okay, that he could sleep, that it would be better in the morning.

Eventually, Foolish fell asleep, even as his eyes kept leaking tears and rage and sorrow billowed around him as he fell into a dark, dreamless night.

#### Chapter End Notes

oh my god this was a really emotional chapter i deadass cried reading it afterwards while checking for errors

and no there is no shipping just sad friend comforting sad friend

but hye, it is done, another chapter on the shelf! next one will be longer and will have a little twist...

# A Choice Made

## Chapter Summary

Eret can't shake the feeling that something's just going wrong, even when there's nothing visibly going on. But maybe its not the sands outside she needs to be worrying about...

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Days passed as the sun rose and set in the eerily silent desert. There were no people here to fill the quiet, no one to do anything with. Everything was empty and dead, like a ghost town that had never even gotten a chance to have people.

Niki healed slowly, slower than she should even with the use of the healing and regeneration potions Foolish had on hand. It was worrying, but they couldn't do much about it. They could only hope that she didn't get worse.

Eret had done quite her fair share of wandering in those days. Everything about the totem's summer home was grandiose and beautiful in that way that only ancient structures - or at least, ancient looking - could be. She had a feeling she would never get tired of sitting high up on the roof of a building or on top of an arch and looking over the sands, or laying blissfully on top of a statue's head at night to watch the stars before she went inside to sleep. There was something about the quiet desert that made her feel at peace. It wasn't like the quiet of the Nether or the Greater DreamSMP. It was a calm quiet, one that told her that she was safe.

Foolish had been quieter than she'd ever seen him. Whatever had been left of his happy, excitable self has burned down and melted into cold, steely anger. She could see it in the way he worked on building the walls around his summer home. Prior to now, he'd had no need to, and due to how remote it was, there was still no need, but he insisted on it. There had been a cold anger in his eyes as he'd told her.

Eret had been keeping watch for the monsters every day, while also keeping an eye on Niki. It was tough to manage, but it was all she could do.

A gust of wind brushed her face as she stood from her place on top of the towering archway. She sighed, letting her hair whip around in the breeze as the dunes far below shifted with movement. There wasn't anything out of the ordinary - the sand seemed to do that itself every day. Foolish had told her that seeing the dunes move on their own was a normal thing. That didn't make her feel any better about their situation, but it was a relief to know that she wasn't seeing something overly concerning.

The sun was high in the sky as she dropped down from the arch and landed a perfect bucket clutch. The water didn't even have time to spill on the sandstone before it was caught in her bucket again. This time she hadn't even felt any impact from the rock below - the water had entirely cushioned her fall.

The walk back to the small building where she left Niki while she scouted around wasn't far from the entry arches where she was. She could have run if she felt like it. But the grandness of the tiny city made her feel too calm to run, too calm to panic about anything other than their safety. The sun blazed down on the white roads, almost burning into her eyes even with the sunglasses she always wore.

Eret sighed as she approached the building. Unease fluttered through her as she reached for the intricate doorknob, and paused.

*Niki will be fine if I leave her for a little longer, right? Eret wondered. I don't need to check on her, right? The last check was only an hour ago, she'll be fine for a little longer if I just go to take a walk.*

*Right?*

For a few minutes, Eret debated going in to see if Niki was finally awake, finally able to start getting back on her feet.

Then she stepped away from the door, pulling back her hand.

“She'll be fine for a little longer.” Eret's voice echoed through the empty city, and she walked away from the door.

The only thing that followed her for the rest of the day was uneasiness and a feeling that something was going horribly wrong. Even the city's weirdly natural calming effects didn't stop her worries.

Eret sighed and just started to walk. She couldn't do this today.

She disappeared into the sands like water into the ocean, not looking back from her choice.

## Chapter End Notes

I know this is an extremely short chapter, but I swear the next one will be longer. Gotta get those filler chapters in somehow, right? The next chapter will be... interesting, to say the least. A break from our main leads.

But that's for next time.

and also holy shit over 3000 hits?? what happened i am not ready for that

But in all seriousness thank you, this project means a lot to me and to see people enjoying it is what helps me keep it going!

# We're Still Here (Part 1)

## Chapter Summary

They're still in there, inside the monsters. But not everyone thinks the same of them...

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Everything hurt. He couldn't describe why or how, but all he knew was that something hurt somewhere inside of him and he didn't like it. Or was it outside of him that hurt?

He wasn't sure anymore. There was the voice, soothing him and telling him that nothing was wrong, that nothing hurt and he was okay in its web. It was just a part of him now. But he couldn't shake the feeling that something was really, really wrong with him and he couldn't ignore that other part of him that begged to be let out and tell him something was really wrong.

*Am I still sick? What happened after I passed out? The last thing I even remember is the mansion... or was it a mansion?*

Ranboo could hardly think through the exhaustion. Like he'd been dunked into a water tank and was slowly burning away, but nothing around him burned the way the water did. It just hurt.

He tried to open his eyes again. He'd tried so many times after what he'd thought was passing out. But something kept closing them, stopping him from seeing anything that was happening. It could only be the weird voice, but he couldn't tell anymore. He wasn't in control of his body.

*Maybe it'll be safer if I don't try to do that, he thought groggily. It hurts more every time I try.*

He sighed, and let himself fall back into nothingness. Ranboo couldn't even fight - just letting this thing be in control was all he could do.

The pain faded away as he fell back, barely aware of anything going on.

-+--

He decided that maybe having an enhanced body wasn't the worst thing to happen to him.

Sure, every time he took control of it he could feel things he'd never thought he'd feel - like the holes in him were eating away at him inside, or how any survival instinct was amplified by a dozen - but it wasn't all bad.

Dream could easily catch anything he came across. Anything big enough to keep him alive another week, he'd catch with his finger webs, as he'd taken to calling them. A basic name, sure, but he didn't feel like thinking of a better one.

The instincts that came with this thing were overpowering some days. Dream would be ousted from the driver's seat and would be forced to watch his turned form behave like an animal. It disturbed him how bad it was some days. And even when he was in control, there were always these weird, instinctual whispers always dancing around his head when he didn't want them to.

Dream did call them by their names - hunger, thirst, sleep - but there was always one that he knew was from the voice in his head, in all of their heads. It didn't bother him often anymore, mainly because he had a feeling he'd gotten it out of the way, but it always hummed in the back of his head.

*Infect. Spread. Turn.*

He had no idea why the voice was the way it was, but nowadays it barely ever tried to control him, and hardly even noted him among the countless other monsters in its arsenal. That he was grateful for - initially breaking free of the thing to have some level of control over his new body was painful in every way. There were some people it bothered more than others - Tommy, Ranboo, Techno - and from the mental web, it sounded pretty annoying to deal with. He was glad he did not get bothered anymore.

*If I'd known this potion would do this, I might have not even bothered using it on anyone else.*

A crack in the bushes around him drew his attention away from his thoughts. His already slitted eyes narrowed further as he scanned the foliage, and spotted a large deer not too far off.

With a horrific grin, Dream stalked away into the bushes after it, losing himself in the hunt.

-+--

Bad was decidedly over this whole monster thing.

There were always red vines covering him that he couldn't get off, he was too big to move through forests comfortably, and every time he put his own claws anywhere on himself they came away disgustingly sticky.

He barely knew where he was anymore - he couldn't see well through the snow covered trees - and the mental web was always twinging and buzzing with activity that he couldn't follow.

Worst of all, Bad didn't know where any of his friends were anymore. He didn't know where Antfrost, Hannah, or Skeppy were. He could feel their presence in the web, but he could never trace them to any specific location. As such, he usually just ended up wandering the old ruins of the Egg Room on the surface.

He was lonely, and he hated his new form. He would rather be called a demon by locals than figure out what the muffin this thing was.

He put a clawed hand on his arm, and promptly removed it when he felt the eerie slime texture under his hands. He looked at his hand, the black strings of slime pulling into it, and closed it in a fist.

Screw it. This new body sucked.

Badboyhalo fucking hated it.

-+=-

Hannah had chosen a really shitty place to turn.

Before she'd finally anchored herself, she'd wandered down into the Red Banquet hall. It was just as weirdly majestic as she'd remembered - the red vines draping from the roof and from wall to wall, the elegantly set table that she'd so loved preparing, the large, imposing egg in the corner of the room.

She'd wandered over there and laid down next to it. Hannah had just started showing signs of turning earlier in the day as her hands turned a dark, vine green and her arms started to split. It had been getting harder to see too, like something was slowly gouging out her eyes.

Hannah wanted to be near something familiar if she was going to become a monster. At least she'd have some comfort then.

The Egg had gone into her mind the second she'd laid next to it, and she'd felt its horror at whatever this other thing was doing to her. Despite how bad she knew the Egg was, how basic its survival needs were, it still had some compassion for its followers.

For the rest of the five days she'd had after that, she hadn't moved as the pain overtook her. The Egg had done its best to fight the thing, but barely succeeded.

Now here she was, blind, yet still feeling as the two battled in her head. She could only tell she was some sort of plant monster from the way vines curled painfully around her shredded wings, or how one of her hands wasn't moveable anymore unless it was to close around something edible that wandered into the cave.

The vines squeezed at her wing remnants again, trying to take them. She felt something roll down her face as she desperately wished beyond anything that she could just fly away and leave everything behind.

*In due time, my loyal follower* the Egg whispered quietly. *The day you're freed from this prison, I will help you fly again.*

Hannah smiled inside, a spark of hope returning to her, as she let herself fall away into another painfully sleepless night.

-+=-

The Nether where he was forced to stay was a nightmare. It was oppressively hot, it made his wiry hands burn, and yet he couldn't think of any place he'd rather be.

L'Manburg? Hell no, that place held too many bad memories. Greater DreamSMP? Also no, things there were pretty bad. Literally anywhere else on the server? An argument waiting to be caused.

Nope, Jack was happier here. Even if the blistering heat made him uncomfortable and he was constantly surrounded by dead and decaying corpses, this weirdly primitive life was better than everything else that happened on the server on a daily basis.

A loud, rumbling sigh escaped him as he turned his head towards the massive lava lake. It took a moment for him to actually see it - one of the downsides of having his eyes hanging out of their sockets - but he felt nothing as he looked out into the warm, bubbling liquid.

Everything was calm. For once, he didn't feel angry or betrayed or hated. He felt at peace in this strange new body, but he also felt uneasy. It felt like something was clinging to his heart, trying to eat him alive from the inside out. It felt stuck to him like glue, and no matter how much Jack mentally fought it, it was always there.

The sound of a few rocks tumbling through the wastes caught his attention. He turned his head, very slowly, to not alarm whatever had made the noise. Jack twisted his wire-made neck, turning it almost in a full circle before finally spotting what had made the noise.

A hoglin was snuffling around through the undergrowth of a nearby crimson forest, its head to the ground and not paying attention to whatever may have been lurking nearby.

The forced grin on Jack's face widened as the monster arose, and before he could do anything, the monster was already quietly zipping toward the hoglin.

Jack sighed and retreated into his head. He was exhausted from trying to keep control. He may as well just let this thing take over entirely. He was just about to do that when a painful jab in his head forced him out of the slumber he'd been falling into.

That was one thing he didn't like about this. The voice forced him to stay awake and alert in this body, even when all he wanted was to let it go and just be gone completely. Even if it wasn't audibly scolding him, it would still force him awake.

An angry sigh escaped him as he watched the monster attack the hoglin, barely caring as his wires tore into it and ripped it apart without even a single bit of damage taken.

-+=-

In all fairness, being a ghost wasn't awful.

He wasn't sure why people had said that his ghost was so different from him. Sure, that day at the train station, he'd seen him crying in fear, but that was probably only because Dream was forcing him to do something he was unwilling to do, but honestly, he hadn't been that different, had he?

Wilbur let out an echoing sigh as he gazed around the ruins. He stood high on the bridge, his dark, clawed fingers clutching tightly at the railings. He wasn't sure why - he'd walked this bridge many times after his revival, and was confident about crossing it every single time. Now his hands shook in a fear he didn't feel whenever he roamed up here.

He wasn't even actually standing on the bridge to begin with - he was just barely hovering over it, his feet replaced by smoky clouds of something he couldn't pin down. The cloak wrapped around his shoulders overtop his musty old coat seemed to vanish at the ends as well.

Wilbur looked over the massive sinkhole, the gentle vines that grew up the sides giving his eyes something to follow as he thought.

In truth, he didn't know why he always felt so angry and sad whenever he used this creature's body. It was like it had latched onto a part of him that he hated, a part of him that he buried and tried not to show anyone until this thing dug it up and brought it out. And the strange web of connections he always listened into when he was bored was another thing - why was it so connected? It just felt odd to him.

A strange hiss started up in his throat, but he knew he hadn't started it. It was the thing in his head, the thing trying to control him. It wasn't pleased with how he was thinking; he could tell from the way anger vibrated off of its connection to him and into his thoughts.

Wilbur sighed and readied himself. Every time he felt rebellious or tried to fight back, the thing simply controlled him and forced him somewhere else.

Without warning, the voice jarred him out of place and into an eerily dark place, all the while his body wandered slowly toward the other end of the bridge.

-+--

Everything was quiet in Snowchester. He knew it wasn't supposed to be quiet here. It was supposed to be lively and safe and a place to go to recover.

Tubbo knew Snowchester wasn't supposed to be as dead as it was. And he absolutely hated it.

He wasn't sure how much time had passed since he'd been locked in the mansion with Dream and Ranboo. It could be days, weeks, maybe even months. He'd lost track of the days after the third day in the mansion.

All he could do now was listen to the heavy silence and wander the ghostly town. The snow crunched below his hooves, the wind blew through, carrying empty dreams. But it couldn't even begin to swamp the endless quiet.

Tubbo hated the quiet. For him, the only quiet moments he'd ever had were in the horribly destructive aftermaths of war and betrayal and losing lives. Quiet was a bad thing.

He kept wandering, barely noticing anything through the unnerving emptiness of his home. Tubbo's wings buzzed as he passed empty market stalls, and he stayed away from the deadened houses as much as he could.

He looked toward the mansion, and an internal shudder went through him. He always felt more strongly connected near it - that thing must be in there.

Tubbo remembered moving into the mansion with Ranboo and Michael. He remembered the happy moments, the moments where he felt the safest.

That safety was gone. His family was gone. He didn't know where either of them were, and all the other monsters who roamed here had seen no hint of them either. Tubbo knew they were in the web, but he could never find them.

Tubbo was overwhelmed by the silence, by the loneliness, and retreated into his head.

He never wanted to hear a silence this loud ever again.

#### Chapter End Notes

woooooooooo we finally come back to characters who aren't still alive, holy crap this chapter took FOREVER TO WRITE MY GODS

# We're Still Here (Part 2)

## Chapter Summary

They're still in there.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

His mind was alive with sound and constant angry chatter, and yet no matter what he tried he could not get it to shut off and just have a still, quiet moment. It was pure torture.

Techno could not find peace anywhere, no matter how hard he tried. He would wander places in the Overworld that only brought back painful memories and feelings of uneasiness, and in his head the voices constantly clamored and tried their best to break free of the horrible curse that had them trapped alongside him.

But nothing worked. And the sound continued

And nobody came.

Every day felt longer than the last, every night passing by in seconds that felt like hours. Techno never let himself look at what he'd become - either way, he would have gone on rampage after rampage, leveling forests in the furthest places of the SMP and destroying small villages. People watched in fear, before fleeing for their lives.

He hated it. He was supposed to have moved on from this life of destruction and war and blood.

But perhaps that had never been Lady Fate's intentions. Perhaps he'd always be Technoblade, the Blood God.

Perhaps he'd always kill, always be the one to start of the slow drop of the crimson stains into the ground below.

Always be a bloodthirsty monster.

-+/-

He wasn't supposed to be so loud.

He was the quiet one. He didn't speak, he didn't interact - all he did was watch and shape the world if need be.

And now all Callahan could hear was the sound of his own voice, horrifically deformed and warped and destroyed. It felt so wrong.

He had seen the people in the tunnel, that day when the Egg had finally been contacted once more. He'd moved toward them, silently begging and praying that they would recognize him and try to help him.

But the look in their eyes had been pure terror. But it was a terror that sat familiar with you once you were accustomed to it or being introduced to it.

Callahan had thought he was the only one changed. But one look at their faces told him all he needed to know. He wasn't alone, and the thought was comforting yet horrifying all at the same time. It explained why there was so much noise inside of his head all of a sudden, after that strange four-legged thing had attacked him.

He wasn't even sure how the thing had found him or known where he lived. He lived so secretly that most SMP members only ever saw him once or twice in their entire lives - the only people who'd seen him more than that had been the founding five.

He'd really tried to get them to help, but the thing tried to force him at them. It made him feel things he never wanted to feel, and he had forced himself to turn down the tunnels to let them get away. Callahan didn't want them to be hurt.

That day, the scream of rage that had ripped itself from his throat after they'd escaped was the only thing he could hear, ringing in his ears and repeating in his mind.

The ringing was back, and he didn't want to hear it. But Callahan couldn't escape it, even as he withdrew as far into his mind as the webs would allow him to.

The screams danced like a horrible song in his head as he let whatever else was there take control.

-+/-

She couldn't feel her legs anymore. Any feeling they'd had were completely gone, even in this form. And knowing what was wrong with them made her angry beyond belief.

Puffy's legs had been destroyed by Bad when the thing that now rested in her mind had stolen her away from her only allies. Her only friend, her child, her fiance.

She hated this thing for it, but she could do nothing about it to soothe her seething mind, to find any peace or calm or sense of familiarity in the seemingly never-ending mind web she was stuck in. Puffy missed knowing anything familiar was around, and being stuck inside this horrible monster's body only made her longing for anything familiar worse.

The monster's body twitched as she forced herself to look through its eyes, its head turning. She was sitting on top of a stone wall, the bricks below her mangled legs covered in snow and the horizon blanketed by a blizzard. The web in her mind shot a quick thought into her mind.

**Watch. Be wary, let no one pass.**

So Puffy was a sentry now, against her will. What she was watching for, she was not sure, but the thing in her mind was keeping her alert and awake. Something on her back moved, and out of nowhere, more images flooded her mind.

More eyes. Not exactly what she'd expected, but with what this thing had a habit of doing to people, they would not be surprised if it had done something more horrific than just her destroyed legs.

As she looked around with her new eyes, she saw monsters roaming on the insides of the walls, their mangled and disfigured bodies moving in jerky motions or scuttling through the snow or slithering along.

A tremor passed through her as she watched them pass by. Puffy was one of them now. She shouldn't be scared of them anymore - they wouldn't hurt her.

*Then why did they hurt me to get me here?*

Puffy had a feeling she would never know.

***It is not your place to know, the voice hissed in her head. Now continue your watch, pest, before I rid my ranks of you.***

The thing forcefully took over, blocking out any more of Puffy's thoughts, and she sank back into the peacefully calm quiet, where no pained wishes or grief-filled longing could reach her with its shadowy grasp.

-+=-

He couldn't even think in his own head anymore. Any thoughts he had were lost to the glassy fog and shredded to pieces through agonizing headaches.

Tommy sank to the ground, hardly aware of the rabbits nearby scurrying away into their warrens. His fluffy, ringed tentacles dug into the ground, and he pulled in his feather-coated arms.

His mind was too crowded and loud for him to even feel comfortable there - which was saying a lot, considering how bad it normally was. But now there were thoughts and commands and information constantly being shared with him and every other person in the mental web. The constant ringing of the web was incessantly loud and Tommy hated it.

So as an alternative, he stayed alert. He stayed in full control of the monster, however painful it was on some days. He did his best to stay out of his own head as much as he could. Tommy let himself live almost freely in the monster's body.

Tommy almost felt renewed. Like the curse the thing had inflicted on them really was a blessing, as it continued to call it. He didn't have to worry about his home being destroyed by any madmen, he didn't have to worry about being stabbed in the back by people he trusted.

The only conflicts he experienced now were between him and any prey he came across when he was hungry. He rarely saw the other monsters, rarely listened to their thoughts. He didn't want to know what they were thinking about this or him or anything - Tommy was entirely fine with being blissfully ignorant.

Sure, parts of him missed it. He missed being able to talk to his friends, he missed fooling around with Tubbo. Tommy even missed the conflict, because it would give him something to do other than just sit in one place waiting for someone or something to meander past so he could catch it.

He heard the faint whispers of the web in his head opening up, the thoughts of the others and the thing crowding into his mind. Tommy immediately shut down his line of thought and returned his attention to the world, before he could get hit with another splitting headache.

He was fine with this. He barely hurt in this body - anymore, at least. There was nothing that could really bother him anymore.

Tommy finally felt free.

#### Chapter End Notes

aggh motivation is not hitting me lately but i swear i will push myself to get this done for you guys, we all know the pain of reading fics and suddenly they're unfinished or on hiatus forever.

hope you're all having a good day!

# From Three to Two, We Fall

## Chapter Summary

Niki has been in a death trance for eight days. She wakes up, but things have changed.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Niki had been out cold in her death trance for eight days. Eret admitted that it was beginning to worry her. The longest death trance she'd ever seen had been Tommy's after the duel for L'Manburg.that had been four days.

"Is she up yet?" Foolish called from the doorway. The sun in the desert beyond was beginning to set, the reds and oranges painting the skies beautifully, and Eret's attention drew away from the quiet that had held her in a death grip for days. The sunset was gentle and flowing, barely begun yet always one of the prettiest things she'd seen in these lands.

"Still no. I've tried everything I could think of to make the trance go by faster, but nothing has worked." Eret looked away from the sunset as Foolish slipped into the room.

"It's a death trance, Eret. There isn't really a way to make it speed up." Foolish's voice had dropped to a hoarse whisper. It made sense - he'd been working on the walls nonstop. He did not even pause during the days to take breaks, and Eret had found herself physically forcing Foolish away from the building at least once per day to ensure he wasn't going to end up getting heat stroke from the blazing desert sun.

"I've still tried everything I can think of," Eret responded, hearing the exhaustion seeping into her voice. "I've tried regeneration, instant health, most of the traditional medicines you have here, and nothing has worked."

Foolish kneeled next to Niki, quietly looking over the woman and letting the silence hang in the air for a moment too long.

"She could have woken up and gone into a coma, or something like that," Foolish suggested carefully. "We did see her eyes kind of fluttering back at the camp."

"Foolish, she's not breathing. She's still in the trance."

Just hearing herself say the words, saying her friend was gone, hurt Eret beyond their understanding. They barely even knew Niki, and even then Niki was a known anarchist who had been a part of the prison break. But it all seemed so insignificant now that she was one of her only allies in this world, now that there was no rime or reason for punishing her for her crimes.

This apocalypse was punishment enough, for all of them.

*Maybe this is Prime punishing us for everything that has happened. The thought flashed up in her mind as she stared out distantly at the wall behind Niki's bed. Because we did so many things wrong. And now they're giving us our karma, the karma we deserve. Everyone here has done something that affected our history - maybe the gods are putting an end to it.*

Eret wasn't sure how much longer they could afford to wait for Niki to wake up. There had been no sightings of the monstrous creatures out in the desert whenever she looked out over it from her place atop the arch, but even the fact that they were not even trying to look for them was making her uneasy.

At some point, they would have to start hunting down the monsters. If they ever wanted to be safe again, they'd have to find a way to reverse the curse. Eret did not want to, but at some point, it would become necessary.

Eret was pulled away from the far-off thoughts by Niki's finger twitching.

At first, she wasn't entirely sure she saw it - that maybe her mind was hallucinating it, that it was only wishful thinking that her ally might be finally waking up.

Her finger twitched again, followed by her entire hand. This time eret had been watching, praying, and apparently the gods hand answered her prayers.

"Niki!" There you are, come on, wake up!" Eret said, quickly moving to try and help her sit up. "We need to get you moving, you've been in a death trance for days-"

"Eret, stop," Foolish said sharply. It was so sudden, so harsh, that Eret did pause> niki was moving to wake up, but there was something about her that felt off. The room was slowly darkening as the stars outside began to blanket the skies, and the sunset had turned a vibrant blood red, and the light that was still coming from the sun was soaking into the walls and giving everything a ruby hue.

"Why? She's finally awake, we can start working on tracking down those things." She thought her reasoning here was pretty sound. Niki was awake - she was the best fighter they had, and a good strategist to boot. They would need her help.

"Eret, back away from her. Something is wrong," Foolish said carefully.

"What do you mean?"

Eret turned back to look at Niki and froze solid.

Foolish was right.

-+=-

Niki had started to wake up from the death trance and all she could hear were voices. Outside her head, and inside. She was not used to so many voices inside her head, and a lot of them did not sound like her own voice. The one voice inside her head seemed to be quieter and

more scared than the other voices even though a fair share of them were terrified or angry or excited.

Then she felt the connections. The zipping, fast messages through strings and interlocking webs, all of them loaded with information and constantly ringing in her head between the voices.

Then she heard a real voice, one outside her head. Familiar, concerned, relieved.

"- there you are, come on, wake up!" they said. The words drifted in and out of her mind, and she barely caught all of them. "We need to... moving, you've been in a... for days-"

Another voice cut them, off barely audible over the cacophony in her head. Something felt incredibly wrong. Her mouth was starting to hurt, and as someone carefully tried to help her up, she felt sharp stings running all through her body. It felt like there was something around her torso - bandages, maybe?

The sharp pain came back, more pointed and ruthless than before. She clenched her teeth - and realized they were slowly lengthening, bit by bit, into thin daggers. Her lips felt like they were melting, and as she carefully raised a hand to brush her face, she realized that they were melting.

*Oh Prime, no.*

She felt the helping hand slide away and the touch gently left her. She silently prayed for it back, wishing someone would be there with her, but it was too late. Nike knew that whoever was there wasn't going to put their hand back on her shoulder.

She hissed loudly and closed her eyes. The sound that escaped her was not human, the transformation slowly taking a hold on her, taking everything that made her Niki and twisting it into something worse.

Niki couldn't think beyond the noise and the pain. She would have blacked out had something not kept her there, collected her thoughts and calmed her.

*Thank the gods*, she thought quickly. She could still feel the pain, but the thing was beginning to pull her away from her body, pull her into an empty, dark place where she would never have to worry again. It started taking things from her, things that she could remember and things she couldn't remember ever doing, sucking it away into an inky abyss and locking it up.

***I am no god***, someone said. It rang clear above everything else, of the deafening quiet that it had trapped her in. ***I am a gift. You don't need to worry about anything anymore - nobody here will betray you or leave you for dead.***

***I can help you take revenge on whomever you please.***

That sounded wonderful, not having to worry about betrayal or backstabbing and being able to take vengeance to her heart's content. But there was something missing.

She still wanted her family.

***Your family is with us now. We can pour your anger and rightfully earned justice down on those who betray you.*** The thing's voice was silky and quiet, yet it seemed to hold the weight of the world behind it. ***I can give you whatever you want, Nihachu. You don't have to be alone anymore. You'll have me.***

It was too good to be true. And yet, as Niki slowly remembered that she had a body, everything drained from her. A cold wave of acceptance doused her, and Niki let herself fall away into the comforting darkness that the thing offered.

Niki didn't even hear her own screams.

-+--

Foolish wasn't stupid. He'd seen the massive gash on Niki's side the day they'd finally left the safe camp and knew she was going to turn eventually. No way would she be able to escape the curse just because the creature didn't mean to give it to her. All he could feel, however, was pure shock and terror, even though he'd had a feeling it would happen eventually.

"Eret, get away!" he shouted, grabbing the king's shoulder and dragging her away from the bed where their ally lay.

Niki brought a hand up to her mouth and dropped it just as quickly, but Foolish could not tell if she was doing it of her own free will or not. It was an action that seemed almost puppeteered, but he couldn't dwell on it for long. Eret stood and backed away from the bed, albeit more hesitantly than he would have liked.

Niki dropped out of the blue blankets, her body twitching and convulsing on the floor, and as the two watched, their friend's legs started melting into a bloody, crimson puddle of flesh and blood and bone. The sound of the transformation taking hold was sickening as bones crunched and moved and readjusted themselves into new places where they never were supposed to go.

Had he not been so paralyzed, Foolish probably would have lost anything he had eaten right then and there. But he had barely eaten all week, so even if he did, there wouldn't be much to lose. Nevertheless, he couldn't help the nauseous feeling rising in his stomach, threatening to make him run out of the room in disgust.

Niki's legs kept melting, dropping into a slow-marching puddle of liquefied flesh. Loud snaps and grinding sounds came from her low-hung head, where her face was. Foolish was n't sure he wanted to know what was happening to her face - hell, he wasn't even sure he could stand seeing another person's face turn into a familiar, yet unfamiliar mess.

The melted puddle of flesh spread slowly across the sandstone floor - and stopped. It started back up, reforming the bones and muscles and whatever skin was left into a scaly, dead gray tail. Her hands grew webbed claws, and fins sprouted up from her elbows and shoulders. The barely healed wound on her side quickly grew into larger fins.

And all the while, one long, ear-piercing scream had been sounding through the air, tearing the blissful peace that his home was meant for to shreds and burying it somewhere deep below ground where he would never find it again. It hurt his ears, the sound of a thin, angry needle running through his ears and resonating in his mind. He couldn't think straight through it all.

The new monster dropped to the ground, and for a moment it didn't move. For a moment, everything was suddenly quiet and empty and yet full of tensions so thick it might destroy everything.

"Niki?" Eret whispered, barely audible after the loud screams yet still loud enough to feel like it was unsafe. The sound was so soft and careful that Foolish half-expected everything around them to just collapse and turn to nothingness.

"Are you still there?" The king's voice broke the silence once again, and the room darkened as the blood-red sun finally decided to set. A low, eerie hissing sound filled the air as the last remnants of any blood on the floor suddenly vanished, and the sandstone was once again a pristine color. As if there had never been a drop of blood on the floor at all. As if Niki's transformation hadn't even happened.

But it happened. There was a monster in his home now, and he didn't even know if it was really a monster yet. He'd seen Jack speak to them all that time ago in the Nether - it wasn't impossible to break free, apparently.

Eret moved to touch Niki's arm, but Foolish pulled her back by the shoulder that he hadn't even realized he was still holding onto.

"We can't afford to lose anyone else. We don't even know if she's still there," Foolish whispered. His voice was still cold and angry and stern. It wasn't like him and it scared him, almost more than the monster on his floor.

The hissing slowed, and eventually dropped into a dead stop. Foolish, against Eret's panicked expression and his own unease, carefully drew his netherite blade from its sheath.

The monster raised its head to meet his gaze, its eyes black like an obsidian abyss. Whatever was behind them was staring deep into Foolish's own eyes. It was an eerie feeling, but it was also oddly judgemental. Like this new beast was holding something against him for something he didn't know he'd done. Foolish finally took a good look at the thing, and what he saw was nothing short of unnerving.

This new creature had no legs - instead, what had been left of those legs were now a deathly gray tail, with pale pinkish-white fins running down the spine. Heavyset scales were decorated all over the monster's body, on its arms and face and front. The scales themselves had odd patterns on them, depicting things that Foolish had never seen before. Rib-like bones jutted from the monster's sides, encasing its chest in a firm hold.

Its face was arguably the most terrifying thing Foolish had seen yet - mouth plates that opened and closed at random, teeth lining the mouth and throat in ever-repeating, jagged

circles, the pink hair running down in messy, knotted strands. There were gills that ran down the side of its throat, flaring and revealing fleshy insides.

Even with how strange and alien the new creature looked, there was still something about it that undeniably told him that this was Niki. That this was someone he knew, who he could still see behind the piercing black eyes. But she was twisted seemingly beyond repair, in a way that Foolish couldn't understand. Under the control of something worse.

It hissed again, shorter and sharper this time. The monster made no moves to attack - it did not seem to be under the control of the thing yet. Or if it was, it was hiding it incredibly well.

"Niki?" Eret's soft whisper carried through the still desert air, and Foolish gripped the sword handle.

*Niki isn't there anymore, dammit. Why is Eret still calling that thing by her name?*

The monster's attention flicked to the king, the mouth plates closing as it eyed her. Eret did not move as the creature dragged itself along the floor, claws scraping into the smooth sandstone and leaving deep, ugly gashes that Foolish would have to somehow fix later.

Everything stilled, and everyone waited.

Not a muscle was moved. Not a breath taken.

It all paused in one place as time slowed. Even the wind deadened.

And the stars stopped glimmering.

## Chapter End Notes

aaaaaa pre-halloween post!

So happy with how this turned out and i'll hopefully get something out on the spooky day too! Hope you enjoy.

# A Theory Proven

## Chapter Summary

Niki has turned, and things are starting to look ever more grim. But in Eret's panic, they may just find something to save them all...

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Eret was the first to move.

She didn't even know what to think when she moved - all she knew was that her hand had gone to her potion belt and pulled out a healing potion.

“Wait, Eret, no!”

Foolish’s warning came too late, as Eret threw the potion at Niki. The contents spilled across the floor, bubbling and hissing loudly as the effects took hold.

Strangely enough, the monster started coughing, spitting something out it’s mouth as the potion seeped between its scales.

“Trust me, Foolish, I know what I’m doing!” Eret shouted.

And indeed, Eret had a pretty good idea of what she was doing. The instant health potion had been accidental - they just grabbed the first potion their fingers had brushed across. But all it took was that one moment of seeing that the potion could negatively affect the monster that Eret had an idea of what she was doing now.

“Foolish, Niki counts as undead, we can use healing potions to keep her down!” Eret shouted. The creature hissed, louder than the hissing of the potion bubbling on the ground.

The totem ran over to the creature and did his best to pin it down while Eret went for another splash potion of healing. The thing that had once been Niki screeched, the sound not unlike a badly played violin. It did its best to struggle, but under the effect of the healing potion, its strength was diminishing quickly.

“Foolish, do you have anything we could possibly use to hold her or tie her down?” Eret called.

“There’s rope hanging in the doorway of one house, three houses to our left!” Foolish shouted. “Before you go, pass me another potion, will you? In case this thing shakes it off!”

Eret threw another splash potion, and Foolish nearly fumbled the catch, his hands clearly not meant for the delicate glass that splash potion bottles were crafted from.

Thankfully, the glass didn't crack. The totem held it firmer than probably necessary, even with the still struggling creature below him. Eret was out the door before either one of them could say another word.

The house that had the rope was closer than Foolish had said, and in her panicked autopilot Eret almost missed it. A small tick of a thin shadow in the doorframe was what made her stop and grab it. The rough feeling between her fingers was grounding enough to make Eret turn around and go back.

She didn't want to. Everything was telling her not to turn around and see what could have happened in the few minutes she was gone. Everything could have gone wrong in those few minutes and she would be none the wiser if she ran away.

But at the same time, Eret knew that if she ran, everything could get worse.

*And after seeing what's happened, I can't let it get worse.*

Eret turned the corner of the doorway, half expecting to see something along the lines of a sea of crimson and two monsters. She didn't even want to imagine what Foolish would look like as a monster.

But instead there was only the same scene she'd left to - Foolish carefully holding down a barely struggling Niki, who was hissing and attempting to claw the totem to bits.

"Keep her down, I've got her arms," Eret said, undoing the rope from its knots and re-tying them around the new monster's wrists. It snarled, the faceplates opening to reveal its tooth-filled gullet. Eret finished her work and stepped back, the monster's eyes catching her own through the sunglasses.

"Now what?" Foolish demanded. "We've got one of the creatures tied up in a sandstone box, and we can use instant health potions on it. Are you going to try interrogating it next?"

His voice was filled with an angry sarcasm, but he had only given Eret another idea.

"Exactly," Eret said with a snap of her fingers. "We'll try talking to the thing behind all their transformations to see if we can get anything out of it. If we can figure something out about it, we can use it to try curing Niki!"

The totem's emerald eyes widened and his expression filled with shock. "You've lost your mind."

"Maybe I have, but do you have a better idea?" The sharp retort hung in the air between them, bitter and tired. Foolish took a step back and bowed his head slightly, which in any other situation would have been a little funny considering how much taller he was.

The king turned her gaze back to the creature, which had been hissing quietly as they spoke. Its dark eyes rolled back into its head and flipped to an eerie white, and a strangled sound

came from its throat.

**“You intend to interrogate me?”** the creature snarled, a malicious laugh coming up from somewhere in its throat. **“Idiotic and lost, that is what you all are. Your friends are happier with me than they ever were with you. They’re safe.”**

“They’re not safe, you jackass!” Foolish chimed in. “They’re monsters! You’ve done something horrible to all of them! Tell us how to fix it or I’ll bash in your skull with the hilt of my axe!”

Shock pulsed through her, and Eret couldn’t help scooting away from Foolish a little. She’d known he was mad about Puffy being taken, but never had they seen him do this. Not even during the Red Banquet when the Eggpire had been threatening everyone’s lives.

Something in her once-cheery, excitable friend had changed. Even after the banquet it had still been there - that spark of hope and joy and pride that everyone on the server had had when they’d first arrived. Eret remembered feeling it; she remembered seeing it in the people of L’Manburg, in the co-founders, in the enthusiasm everyone had had while creating the things they enjoyed.

And now it was gone in yet another person she knew. The spark of hope had been blown out, and all that was left was the angry, painful smoke that wreathed around them until they were nothing but a walking haze of bitter grief.

And Foolish was being shown the smoking gun that had shot the spark and killed it only a few weeks ago. The smoking gun that laughed in the face of the tragedy, without remorse or anything that could even.

Eret could understand why he was so angry, even if it was startling.

**“Your friends are safer than they’ve ever been. Your acquaintances are safer. Your enemies, even if you curse ill upon them every night, are safer. I am a gift, and I have fulfilled this purpose.”**

“You are nothing but a scourge,” Eret sat calmly. “I saw how Jack pleaded for us to leave before you took over and hurt one of us. From what I can tell, the warning did us no good, but he’s still in there and I know he wouldn’t stand for this.”

The creature laughed, a harsh scraping sound through the unholy amounts of teeth. The white eyes blinked and stared directly at Eret, a contrast to the monster’s usually obsidian black eyes. Even she would have preferred the soul-piercing black eyes over this horrific eggshell white. It made her feel uneasy and sick.

Its laugh died down, and the mouth plates slammed shut. **“Jack is perfectly happy in his place in the Nether. From what I hear from him, he’d be perfectly content to chase ghosts and hunt the people of these lands for the rest of his life. He is free from the torment that these lands have brought and the people who started it, and yet here you are, trying to bring him away from that freedom. Don’t you want your friends to be happy, King Eret?”**

"I do want them to be happy. But not as whatever twisted demons you've made them. They can be happy as normal people."

**"Then tell me why Niki let me in. She could have struggled, she could have fought me like Philza or Tommy or Bad or Quackity. Instead she came along willingly, like a lost, scared child. She only asked for her family and for vengeance, and then she fell into my web. She didn't fight me, and soon I will give her what I promised. I am a part of their lives, and you cannot just cut me away from them. They will die before you rid the world of me."** The creature's waving voice ground to a halt, and the eyes flipped back to their usual obsidian black before closing.

The room fell silent as Foolish backed away from the creature and sat down on the crafting table. Eret did not move from her place next to the creature, her eyes absently watching its back rise and fall with gentle breaths.

Something about the way the thing had been speaking was ringing an alarm in her mind.

*It was something they said, Eret thought, it was off, like they gave something away without realizing it. I don't think it even realized that it was spilling something, because something about it just feels important.*

*But I can't pinpoint what.*

"Foolish," she said, in almost nothing but a whisper. The totem looked up, his eyes angry and glowing in the darkness of the sandstone box. "Did anything that the thing said... stand out to you? I feel like it said something important."

"I don't know, it was on a rant," Foolish snapped. "Something about how everyone would die before it was purged, it was going to give everyone what it promised, some shit like that. Seems like a typical evil demon speech if I've ever heard one."

*Everyone will die before you rid the world of me.*

*Soon I will give her what I promised.*

*She asked for nothing but her family and vengeance.*

*Don't you want your friends to be happy?*

It hit Eret in a flash. She knew what to do. Even if she didn't like it, she might not have another choice. This could be her only chance to save Niki and see if the brewing theory in her mind was right.

It could be their only chance to cure them all.

Eret stood from her place, putting on her armor and drawing her blade from its sheath.

FINALLY A CHAPTER THAT STARTS LOOKING TO THE END PLOT HOLY CRAP

nothing else to say just relieved to get this chapter out.

# Hope Restored

## Chapter Summary

The final three make a discovery that changes the course of everything.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

There was no warning. Nothing that could have told her what was coming.

The health potion had been draining - Niki knew her health was way down after that, and despite how strongly she had struggled, nothing in her had the strength to really fight these people anymore. She was tired, and she wanted what the creature had promised her.

Then the thing had spoken through her, taking hold of her mind and forcing the words out her mouth without her cooperation. Had she known how painful that was, she might have chosen to try and stay human at least.

She looked up from her place on the floor, blinking in confusion as the person before her went from tired traveler to warrior in an instant. The blade of their sword caught her eye, and she wondered if they were going to cut her loose and let her wreak havoc the way she was meant to.

“Niki? Are you still in there?” the warrior asked softly.

She was. She was still there, she recognized the voice, but she couldn’t pinpoint the name. The hazy anger that the creature seemed to hold somewhere inside her blurred the name to her thoughts.

Carefully, not entirely sure if the thing was still there, Niki made the monster nod. It wasn’t her body, but it still responded.

“I’m going to need you to trust me, okay?” the warrior said.

Trust. The one thing she couldn’t do with people anymore. How could she know that this person was going to do something good? What if they hurt her more than the thing?

She realized the monster was shaking its head in refusal. She couldn’t trust people - that was how the world worked.

“Niki, please. I think I have an idea on how to change you back. You can help us get everyone back. We can get everyone back if this works, and you can kick the ass of whatever made you into this. You can get the first punch, I don’t care, please, just trust me.”

"Eret, the hell are you doing?" another voice asked. "Niki isn't in there anymore, it's probably that thing talking."

She couldn't help but hiss at the new voice. They were doubtful that she was still here?

"Niki, please. That thing can't offer you the vengeance you're looking for. That thing is the one that took all our friends. It's the one who took Puffy and Jack and Phil and Techno. You need to trust me this time. Please."

The warrior's voice was calm, but she heard the plea in their voice. Barely audible, but it carried so much grief. Like they'd seen the world end and were giving their last chance their all.

*The thing helped me though, some part of her thought, out of the blue. I can trust it; it said it would give me my family and my revenge.*

*So why haven't you seen anyone you know? The other part stepped in. It promised you everything you ever needed and yet you haven't even seen a hint of it.*

*It's only been a day-*

*That's bullshit. It could have made you move back to them. You could have been made to escape when it had the chance and yet you're still sitting here alone. You could do all these things yourself yet you're blindly following something that frankly doesn't even care.*

*For once, why not give it a shot, Niki?*

The warrior watched on as she made the monster's head nod. It was so careful and slow. Even with all the faith she was putting into this stranger, she was still terrified.

*They asked me to trust them. They can get me what I want for real.*

The caution slowly began to fade away as they watched the stranger readjust their grip on the sword they carried. It glinted in the dark as a green glow, coming from the other stranger's eyes, dancing along the blade without a care in the world. It reminded her of another thing, the green - one who smiled through the madness they caused without mercy, who she had rescued.

Something about them had caused her to be like this. She wasn't sure why.

Any caution left in Niki drained out of her as the blade rose higher in the air, the tip pointed down at her back. She lowered her head and it dropped into the now-still puddle of liquid that had once been the potion.

*You have to trust them.*

Something inside her disconnected - the mental web that had started to sing in the back of her mind died out and the chatter fell silent. Everything went quiet.

There was no warning, yet Niki wouldn't have wanted any warning.

The netherite blade plunged into her back and into her heart, through the fresh scales and new bones. The fleshy sound rippled through her ears as more pain bloomed in her chest; even if perhaps it was a different kind of pain.

It was sharp and swift, and before Niki knew it, her body was shuddering and her eyes began to drift closed.

And in her mind, she felt the thing, enraged yet being forced away into retreat, without any resistance. It was gone.

*They did it.*

-+--

In the dark, the counter stood, the hearts at its center glowing and pulsing. The middle heart was covered in a strange, orange-reddish goop, pulsing and popping and hissing into nothingness.

The middle heart went from red to gray, cracking and falling apart into the void. The slimy thing hissed and shuddered, before shriveling up into dust and falling away in an eerily calm snow.

The heart shattered, falling into the dark.

And one remained, with two lines drawn across it.

One life left.

-+--

“ERET, WHAT-” Foolish couldn’t even finish his sentence, he was so shaken.

The king stood above the body of the monster, hand still on the grip of her sword and a look of grim determination on her face.

*Oh my Prime, Eret’s lost it.* There honestly couldn’t be any other explanation for it. First she’d insisted on the monster still being Niki, still having her in there, and even with that she’d gone ahead and stabbed her in the back.

And now Niki was probably dead for real. No way would she have lived through the transformation, probably having taken one of her lives. And now Eret had taken her last one. Niki was actually dead.

A chill swept through Foolish, not unfamiliar but all too cold for his liking.

He was in a room by himself with a dying monster and maddened king. Something about it was almost funny to him - that after everything, after watching it all end, that he would meet his own end to the blade of the last unturned person in the SMP.

Eret turned to him, their dark sunglasses askew and their pale, white eyes staring at him as though there was nothing left of him to see. Only an empty shell of a person.

“Why did you kill her?” Foolish whispered. “I thought you said you had an idea on how to save her, not get rid of her last life!” His voice rose, the dark room around him echoing it through the massive, empty city outside.

“I didn’t take her last life,” Eret said, standing at her full height. “I took her second.”

“Like *hell* you did! The turning probably stole her second life and you just ensured she’ll stay dead! What is wrong with you?”

The question hung in the air, the words scraping Foolish’s throat raw with the weight. The fight drained out of him as the king turned her head to look at the monstrous corpse on the ground, dark blood pooling across the floor and glinting in the thin blade of moonlight edging their way in through the windows.

“I… I don’t know… Oh Prime, what did I do?” Eret whispered, and Foolish saw the sense and shock coming back in waves as the king stumbled back from body. Her sword, shimmering with violet magic, stilled its odd dance across the netherite as Eret’s hand fell away. The magic only reacted to a living heartbeat, and if it hadn’t been clear to him from the sword in the creature’s back, the frozen magic said it all.

Niki was dead, more dead than any of the other monsters. Because now she was truly gone.

Foolish tore the sword from the creature’s scaly back, dropping it onto the massive clawed hand as he walked toward the door. The netherite in his hands, warm as it was supposed to be from its material, was colder than ice. The only warmth on the blade was from the fresh blood.

Eret had her back against the wall, her sunglasses off and her breathing shaky. Foolish did not move to her side as he would have before - this was entirely Eret’s fault. She could deal with the consequences.

Everything was dead silent. No desert winds blew outside. No mobs sounded from beyond the city’s new walls. Nothing.

Foolish looked back to the discarded sword - and immediately did a double take as the enchantments on the sword slowly began to wander over the hell-forged metal.

He did not dare say a word as the hand that the hilt lay in started twitching and convulsing, bones shortening and snapping back into place. The claws retracted back into fingernails, the scales turned liquid and back into human skin.

Before long, Eret had noticed as well, scrambling back to the doorway of the sandstone room in fear. Foolish stepped back from the corpse as the sounds of cracking bones grew louder and the monster’s body convulsed more violently.

The tail that had once dominated the length of the room split into two and morphed back into legs, and the scales all faded back into the skin as though they'd never been there. The fins on its back and arms melted away like poorly cured clay.

The body stopped twitching, and Foolish dared to look closer.

Struggling to get up among the blood and melted flesh, as if she'd never been turned, was Niki, her pink hair trailing in the pools and shuddering from a chill Foolish could feel running down his back like a claw.

She looked up at Eret, her eyes back to a soft brown instead of cold black. Niki opened her mouth, the words she spoke grinding and harsh, but human sounding all the same.

"It worked. You did it. Holy fuck, you did it. I can't hear that thing in my head anymore, it's gone." Niki's voice was so achingly familiar, and yet...

Foolish couldn't be entirely sure it really was Niki. Everything about her seemed so different. The way she was holding herself, even when she was on the ground and kneeling in a pool of her own blood. Her harsh voice, still sharp and uneven from the turning, was firmer and more steady than he'd ever heard it. She seemed a lot more sure of herself now than before.

Eret said nothing, but it was so silent that Foolish heard the tiny gasp that escaped her. He could not help but move closer to Niki.

*Am I dreaming? Is any of this actually happening?* His thoughts wandered in circles, but when he reached to offer Niki his hand, the feeling of skin against his own told him he was not dreaming as she rose to her feet.

"I... I thought it wouldn't work. I can't believe it." The shock in her voice was evident.

"Wait, so you killed Niki and you *weren't even sure what you were doing would work?*" Foolish snapped suddenly, yanked out of his daze by the words.

"It doesn't matter anymore, Foolish. What's done is done," Niki said sternly, shockingly for having just thrown caution to the wind with the stunt Eret had pulled. "And it worked. I know what we need to save everyone else."

She stumbled, and Eret reached out to help steady her. To Foolish's surprise, Niki let her - as though she had more faith in the king than before.

"We know what to do." A grim smile crossed the woman's lips and a thought crossed Foolish's mind as Eret started helping her check for any more trace of the thing.

*They really did it. There's still hope.*

*We can bring everyone home.*

THIS TOOK SO LONG FOR ME TO WRITE BUT I'M SO HYPED BECAUSE END OF STORY COME SOON LETS GO

My brain is like "I wanna see how it ends" cause its in reader mode and i agree but then i remember that i have to write it lmao

Have a good day or night everyone!

# Angel of Death

## Chapter Summary

They're still in there, but even the people with the most good in their hearts have been slowly corrupted by the thing.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It was easy to forget that he couldn't fly some days.

Phil absolutely hated the fact that he couldn't fly. He had hated it the day his wing had been destroyed, and everyday that he'd looked up to the sky only reminded him of what had once been. He missed the open air, the brush of cold clouds on his hands, the wind under his wings and flying with his crows.

He would have thought that maybe being turned into a monster would restore his wings and let him feel like that again.

But he was wrong. The scars on his left wing had instead spread to all six of his newfound wings, and where he could once hover for a few moments he was permanently grounded. There wasn't even the possibility of him flying anymore - he was stuck on the ground, possibly for the rest of his life.

It made Phil angrier than he'd ever been about his wings. An elytrian confined to the ground for too long never spelled good for anyone around, and if the destroyed village he was wandering said anything, it spoke the truth.

The rings that were now his neck swiveled and the eyes looked around, drawing his attention to something still standing amongst the wreckage of the village. He hissed and drew closer to it, every eye on and in his body focusing on the object.

Sitting there in the middle of the village was an old tree, the trunk twisting and curling around itself. The branches were low hung and wavy, the leaves that dripped from them swaying gently in a breeze Phil could no longer feel.

It wasn't a type of tree he recognized, even in all his years of exploring the distant lands beyond this one. It was new and unique, and the eyes picked out that the tree was growing fast enough for him to see it, but still slow enough that he wouldn't have noticed if he hadn't been looking.

A shadow behind the tree drew some of his attention. He continued to watch the tree grow, but kept eyes on the upper branches and on the sides in case something chose to leap out at

him.

His wings stiffened as the shadow ran toward a burning wreckage, lighting them enough to see that it was not a creature. It was a person.

The thing in his mind sent a wave of hisses through the web, and Phil remembered feeling one of the mental connections snap and turn to dust.

Maybe this was who had escaped. Maybe if he caught them, he'd be turned back to normal and let free.

Phil could only hope.

Quietly, he folded his wings, and drifted soundlessly toward where the shadow had disappeared, everything inside of him intent on capturing the lost creature. He heard his exposed heart beat louder and all eyes were on the trail that lay ahead of him. The hunt was on.

## Chapter End Notes

adsiufje why did this take so long its such a really really short chapter lmao

I do apologize for the short chapter the next one will be longer.

hope everyone's having a good day or night!

# Silent Forest

## Chapter Summary

The three lone survivors have devised a plan, and are now awaiting it to carry out. But being alone in a forest never spells good things.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

This plan was absolutely insane. Foolish did not know why he'd ever thought agreeing to this was a good idea, but it was too late to turn back now.

Him and Eret were lying in wait in the trees, cautiously waiting. The wind blew through the forest, making branches creak and bushes rattle. Every time he heard something in the forest snap, Foolish couldn't help but flinch at the sound. Being in the dark forest almost entirely on his own with the whole monster situation was not helping him stay calm.

Niki's plan had seemed straightforward enough when she'd proposed it - lure a monster to a secure location, get through to them, and kill them. If everything went right, then they would apparently change back into their regular selves.

The only problem was how many lives the person they were testing it with had. If it was more than one life, they'd be fine to try it out - if it was one life, they'd have to do an entire sidequest just to find Dream's stupid revival book and bring whoever it was back to life.

Foolish wasn't even sure that anyone except for Dream knew where said revival book was, which was a bit of a problem, considering he only had one life and they couldn't test it on him without having to search for it, and the asshole might not even tell them where it was.

A loud snap from his left made him jump. Foolish was only part-way through unsheathing his sword, a panicked spiral running through his head, when A hand came down on his shoulder from the same direction and Eret's voice reached his ears.

"Shh, calm down, it's just me," she whispered. The king settled next to him, and Foolish slowly put the netherite sword back in its sheath. The forest was still eerily quiet, still waiting for Niki to return with whichever monster happened to spot her.

"This is a bad idea," Foolish muttered. "We're going to get killed doing this."

"What makes you say that?" Eret's voice was cautious, and more wind blew through the trees. Clouds blew away from the moon, casting an unnerving silver glow throughout the forest. Foolish would have thought it looked pretty had he not been waiting for something horrifying to come out of the trees.

"Niki's literally leading a monster to us, and we're supposed to try and get through to them, whatever that means. And then we're supposed to kill one of these things! How do we know it won't just murder or turn us the second our guards are down?"

A calm hum from the king. "Niki knows what she's doing. It's not like we know what being one of them is like, as thankful as I am for that."

"How do we know she's not still connected to that thing?" Foolish snapped softly.

Eret sighed. "I understand you're nervous Foolish, but we need to follow through on this. If we do this a second time and it works, we could have just found a way to cure everyone on the server. Things could go back to normal if this works."

A silence stretched between them, the gusting wing filling it with its soft, gentle sounds. Foolish wasn't stupid. Things wouldn't just go back to normal after something like this. There would be repercussions for actions, there would be attacks, there would be imprisonment and arguing and more violence.

*So yeah. Pretty much back to normal, considering how often it happens here.*

A small sigh escaped him. A long, loud creak from a nearby tree nearly had him on his feet and running.

"Will you relax, please?" Eret muttered. "It's just a tree."

"It could have also *not* been a tree, dude," Foolish snapped. "At this point anything could be a monster for all we know."

"You have a point, but you can't get too jumpy," Eret said. "You'll get overrun with fear and before long you'll get lost."

The creak sounded again, and this time, Foolish chose to ignore it. He waited a few moments, but nothing happened, and the forest fell into silence again. Quieter than before, but not enough to freak him out too badly.

The creak echoed, longer and louder.

*Don't get too jumpy. Just ignore it.*

That was a mistake.

## Chapter End Notes

Once again i apologize for the short chapter the next one will absolutely be longer, just trying to get in those good old filler chapters while I can

Also doing a book draft right now and my attention has been very split so thank you to those who have been patient!

# You Can Rest Soon

## Chapter Summary

A monster attacks Eret and Foolish, trying to bring them into the web. Why won't they comply? Why are they fighting back?

Where is the loose end?

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The ones he was hunting were still untainted by the entity's control. There was nothing of their presence, of these minds, in the web. They were completely foreign, the energies out of synchronization with the rest of his world.

That wasn't right. Everything was supposed to be connected, tied up in a knot instead of a loose end. These were loose ends. Prime, they weren't even connected in the first place.

*I can fix that.*

*I know I can fix it.*

He may have been slower than most, on his split, stumpy legs, but from what he'd discovered he could pack one hell of a punch if he was close enough.

That was all he needed. To close the distance, and tie up the loose ends.

Slowly, he inched through the trees, coming up behind the two huddled figures, his stump legs creaking loudly in the night. Every time one of the figures jumped, he stopped, in case they turned around and saw him. But neither did, and once he was sure they were no longer alert he kept moving.

He was right behind them. He could take them both back and be rewarded by the thing.

*No, this doesn't feel right*, something in his head screamed, a voice that was beyond the peace that the hunt brought, in the pain and the strangeness beyond the surrender of control.

He ignored it, forcing it back into the recesses of his mind. Mercy was irrelevant, and he could fix them right here and now. The creature had seen it before, with the countries and wars past. Names and faces were lost in the fog, but continuing the hunt took priority.

His legs let out the longest creak yet, but this time, neither figure reacted to the sound.

*Thank Prime.*

George could catch them. If they were ignoring the sounds, he could creep up as close as he needed to turn them. Although he only had one dose...

He'd need to choose. One of them was arguably more uneasy - the one who'd been jumping up and drawing his blade at every sound. The other might be the easier target, as they were calm and less worried. Seemingly, anyway.

George crept onward, hushed whispers of the urge to spread and hunt growing louder in his ears by the second. He settled on the less jumpy one, lurking carefully behind them and waiting to see what they might be doing.

Nothing. No reaction, no awareness of his presence. It was perfect.

George raised a trunk-like arm, a long needle sliding out silently, readying to strike-

And a signal from the mental web, an alert of danger, had him pausing. It was coming from Phil, who was apparently chasing down the disconnected thread. The one who had *escaped*, a notion that felt both right and wrong all at once.

Why was he signalling danger? Phil could easily take down a normal person - they were nothing in comparison to their enhanced strength.

Unless...

Unless the disconnected one was *actually* hurting him. Alarm within the mental web was never sounded without reason.

*It doesn't matter.*

*There are loose ends.*

*Choose wisely.*

***You can only fix one of them.***

George's attention returned to the untethered brings in front of him, but he'd moved his head too quickly. Something in his neck cracked, much louder than any surrounding noise.

One of the figures turned, and George was met with flashes of gold under netherite armour, emerald eyes, and an ear-piercing scream. It was Foolish, and barely a few seconds later George was being held at swordpoint by Eret.

***You can only fix one of them.***

A broken shriek tore from George as he raised his arm once more, the twisted needle lunging forward, toward a crack in Eret's armour.

He was fast. But Eret was faster.

Her blade cut clean through the needle, sending sparks of pain through George as he stumbled back on a few of his new legs. Another shriek escaped him, this one laced with pain, as Eret called something to Foolish under the cacophonous sound.

*Why does it hurt, I'm supposed to be safe, it's not supposed to hurt, nothing is supposed to hurt anymore-*

Another signal echoed out from Phil's connection, much louder and more urgent than before. Geroge let out his own distress call, ringing through the web and alerting the others.

The others.

A ring back, dismissive and blissfully ignorant.

*A nightmare, you're just having a nightmare,* the returning calls said.

The twisted monster reeled back as another blow from Eret's blade cut one of his legs, blood spraying out into the grass from living wood.

The others thought he was asleep. They thought he was dreaming.

They were leaving him here to fall.

George let loose a horrific screech as Eret's blade cut into another limb, backing away, trying to regain any ability to win this fight and do what needed to be done. Foolish had joined in as well, his own weapon battering the monster senseless as he tried anything and everything to regain the control he so desperately needed to win the fight.

*I don't need control.*

*I want to be left alone.*

The realization made him stumble back, a quieter call echoing out as he raised a wooden limb in self-defense.

He wanted to leave. He wanted to *rest*, but the quiet urge to infect, to spread, to tie up the loose ends, kept stopping him from retreating.

***You only have one chance,*** the entity hissed.

*I don't want to do this, I want to hide, I want to rest, leave me alone-*

***One chance-***

George was thrown backwards, and he shrieked as his spider-like legs flailed near uselessly in the air. He couldn't get up, there wasn't any time to get up. A blade levelled with his face, and Foolish pinned down one of his arms with his boot while Eret kept her blade steady.

"George," she said, a blank look on her face as she spoke. "Are you there, friend?"

*Are we friends?*

*It's been so long.*

*Why are my memories fuzzy?*

“Are you in there?” she asked again, the tip of the blade shaking slightly as she moved. “Am I speaking to George, or whatever monster is behind this?”

She lowered the blade, just barely, down toward the creature’s face, and he bared a row of sharp teeth.

“Answer me,” she snapped. “Or I’ll put this blade through your teeth.”

The words sent echoing shivers through his mind. Somewhere in the mind web, the words resonated with some of the others. He wasn’t entirely sure who the resonances belonged to, but they had already left him behind.

“*I am George,*” he hissed, the words painfully scraping through his teeth. Speaking was awful. Really, why he had done this once upon a time was beyond him.

Eret’s blade retreated, just barely, but enough for George to start hissing again. Her only response was to shove the blade back in his face once more.

“Enough,” she snapped coldly. “Foolish, contact Niki and let her know that we might have a safer monster to test our theory on. It might be easier to start this on someone with more than one life left.”

Foolish eyed Eret, and George’s own curiosity got the better of him. The entity hissed in the background, but George’s focus was on whatever theory Eret might have.

*Niki is the escaped link, the mental web sang. She broke the cycle, she ran from safety, she ran.*

*What is she doing?*

“Are you sure that’s a good idea?” Foolish asked. “Niki’s plan said to wait for whichever one she could get to follow her first, and then we test it out again.”

“George still has more than one life,” Eret pointed out. “Presumably. It might be safer to try this on someone who has more than one anyways. We don’t know what could happen if we try it on a one-lifer anyways, because totems might not work for this.”

George growled, struggling under the heel of Foolish’s boot. They were planning something. They were planning something, and it had something to do with the broken thread, and he had to stop them.

*Spread.*

*Infect.*

## *Infec t*

“Alright. I’ll let her know.”

The monster shrieked in fury, trying to escape the grasp of the totem above him. Eret lowered her blade to the roots around George’s throat, the cold of the netherite pressing in deeper than was safe. Something cut in the roots, and blood spilled out between the bark and rotting fungi and scattering into the grass below.

A few moments passed, before Foolish looked back over at Eret. “She’s on her way, but apparently there might be something following her. If your theory is right, we’ll have to do it fast.”

Another snarl tore from him, panic and fury pulled through the monster’s mind, his struggling increasing as Foolish pressed his arm into the dirt further.

Eret lowered her glasses, and the only look behind her eyes was cold, quiet worry. Not a worry for herself, but almost a worry for the monster she had her sword buried into.

It was almost calming.

“We’ll fix this, George,” she said cautiously. “We might be able to save everyone. But we need you to trust us, and we need your help.”

George growled, doubt rising in his side of the mental web, but there was no fury behind it. The urge to infect still lingered in the back of his mind, but the strangely reassuring nature of the words helped.

“We can help everyone. And then we can all finally rest.”

*Rest.*

*Peace.*

George stopped his struggle, keeping himself in control of the monstrous body instead of hiding behind instinct.

It would be safe soon.

And soon, George could rest.

The monster settled in, and allowed himself to wait, netherite blade still stuck fast in his neck.

Chapter End Notes

HI HELLO I'M SORRY THAT THIS FIC DIED FOR 5 YEARS THE HYPERFIXATION VANISHED BUT WE'RE BACK NOW!

I'm gonna make it clear that updates for this fic are probably still gonna be pretty infrequent while i work up the drive to push through the rest of this fic and it's plot, but I will do my best to try and complete this fic! I hope that you enjoy the new chapter!

Also, please be patient with me while i get back into the swing of this one, because I haven't interacted with much DSMP lore or media since the end of the Las Nevadas arc, meaning I'm going to have to do a bit of research into the ending and how everything wrapped up, so if there's anything that you all notice as being off or incorrect, please let me know so that i can correct it or figure out how to implement it later! I would really appreciate it!

The main reason that i ended up dropping this fic initially was because the hyperfixation was starting to fade out, which just happens a lot, but also because i was starting to get burnt out. I also started this pretty much mid-Covid, and quite a few things happened between the last update for this fic and this chapter. I ended up graduating before this chapter was finished, and i admite that for a while the chapters are probably gonna be shorter, but I will definitely be coming back around to this as best i can!

Hope you have a good day/night!

## End Notes

I just thought this would be a cool thing to write and bring to life so I did it. Hope you enjoy the rest of the chapters too!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!